

# TRANS MOGRI FICATION

ADEOLA BALOGUN



# TRANSMOGRIFICATION

A Solo Exhibition of Labyrinthine Morphology

ADEOLA BALOGUN

**SIGNATURE GALLERY**  
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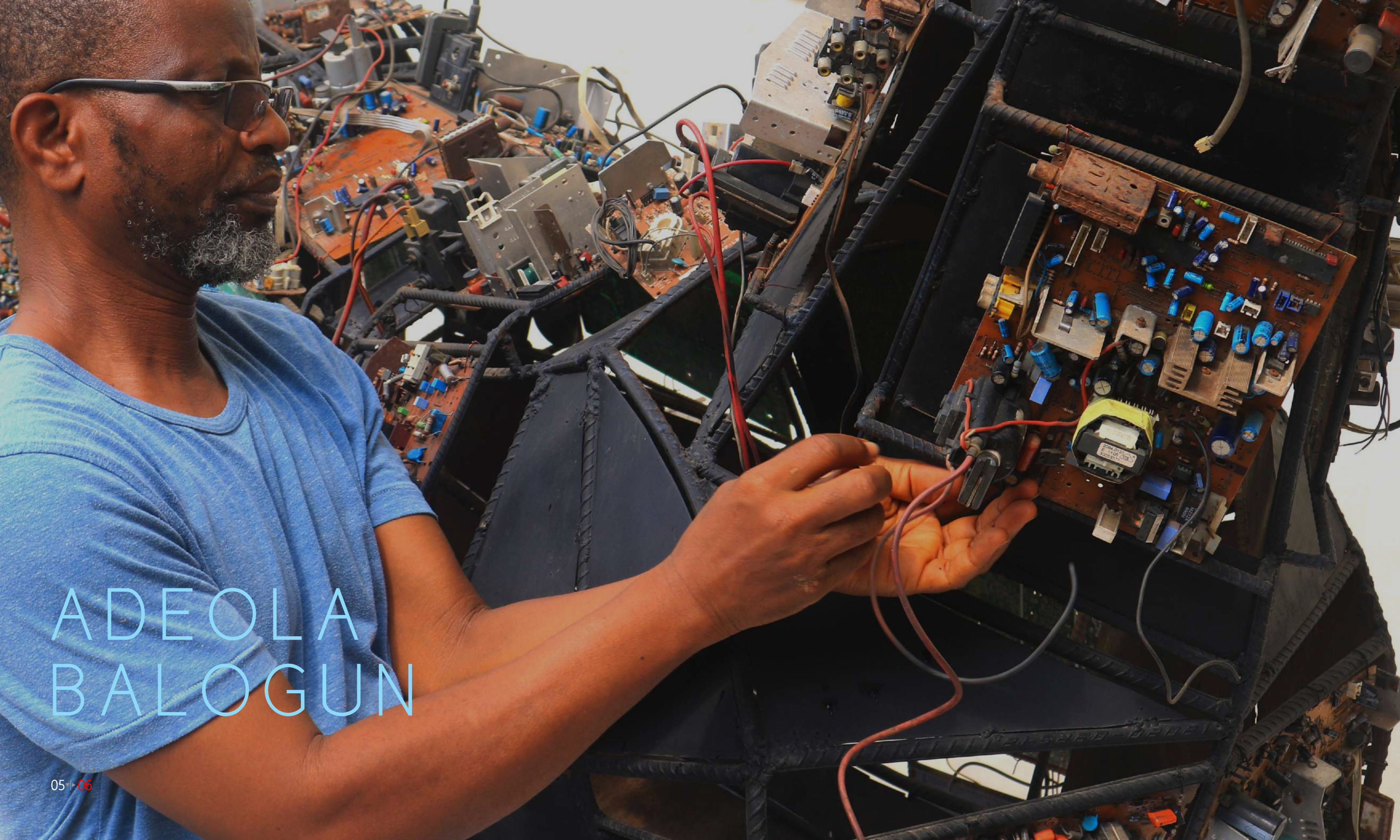
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ADEOLA  
BALOGUN



## TRANSMOGRIFICATION: Adeola Balogun's unfathomable depth for new possibilities in media metamorphose

Art making like its society is dynamic. This assertion portends the explorative context of art as definer of society. From ancient aesthetic philosophies of Socrates, Plato to Aristotle up to modern critical discourses by Arthur Danto, Charles Baudelaire, and others on the subject of the meaning and place of art in society, none has been able to unravel, or define the true essence of art making in terms of the depth of media application and its possibilities. Whereas the essential use of media for art has contagiously defined art periods, artists and forms from prehistory, its insatiability inclination is phenomenal. No wonder studio research is never ending. The possible most bizarre of all in the unquenchable media glut is in engaging form without media. Salvatore Garau's invisible sculpture (2021) is an example.

For this treatise, it is instructive to state that, the deep mine of media possibilism implodes critical thinking in the context of art development from its very primary beginnings. The Nigerian art history is very rich in this context. First, it was the transformation of clay into terra-cotta as recorded in the typicality of the Nok Pieces which flourished between 1500BC to 500AD. The artworks present a media language in regards to the creative instinct of that society. The media, technique, form, and content of the pieces are no doubt factual data for ethnographic enquiry into that lost culture. To fully understand and appreciate the depth of thought in the media exploration that gave birth to those pieces, one may need to apply for Ph.D degree in Ceramics into the study of the chemistry of clay plasticity in relation to the physics of heat and its processes. The objective being to attain the right temperatures for earthenware permanence that could assure its impermeability underground without protection for over 800 years. The positive result of such study will only be mimicking the status of the Nok pieces at their discovery in 1928.

In 1939, the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD Igbo-Ukwu bronzes which again unveils a new creative experience in media exploration was discovered. The rare detailed character of the works provokes questions that counter Eurocentric thoughts of Africa as a dark continent without technological prowess before contact with the West. Also

the 11<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Ife and Benin bronzes, which cultural links unveil socio-political relations between Ife and Benin cultures add to the repertoire of media exploration of ancient cultures. The post 15<sup>th</sup> century developments of Benin Bronzes are further developments in response to copper abundance as shipments from Europe thus expressing that socialization.

Since the early 1900, due to western culture of recorded history and today's internet transmitted media, society has become more accessible and discoverable. Yet the phenomenon of artistic inquiry in the pool of the depths of media choice and manipulation has continued to attain new dimensions for personalized idioms. Arising from this, the development and dynamism of contemporary Nigerian art like her counterparts in other global climes, has taken new turns which responds to new classifications such as conceptual and Installation art. To further define the context of the new art, disposables or found object have found relevance in the studio as media for "up-cycling". It is from this hindsight of creative experience that Dr. Balogun Adeola, in this exhibition is introducing the register "TRANSMOGRIFICATION" to the pack of terminologies. "TRANSMOGRIFICATION" in this exhibition brings to mind the phenomenon of media metamorphose in contemporary art. In his quest to dig deeper into the reserve of media extrapolation, Adeola's new nuances have become obvious in character and expressivity, thereby pushing the possibility boundaries of supposedly common place materials. In my Forward to Okay Ikenegbu's "After the Rain" (2022) exhibition, I critically tinkered on what I referred to as studio war between media and form, for which form is the favoured combatant. In that treatise I also affirmed that content is Achilles heels of both competitors.

In TRANSMOGRIFICATION, Balogun's found objects (discards) tales their tortuous journey from their original sphere of relevance to loosing it and being thrown away; of how they got picked up somehow, found their way into the art studio and became materials to invent a new life which was never envisioned in their original

first life. In the new mode, their identity is subsumed as means to attaining a higher muse of aesthetic order in response to the artist's vanity. In this context one can argue over and over again that Balogun's media TRANSMOGRIFICATION (etymologically late 14<sup>th</sup> century) is another war field for the age long artist ploy to wholesomely and absolutely exploit media. The closest win of media over form may be Barbara Hepworth's wooded Single volume sculpture, Piet Mondrian's colour blocks, Brancusi's Bird in flight, Jackson Pollock's pigment splashes, Duchamp's "Urinary" and Warhol's "Brillo Boxes" concepts and installations, yet it is obvious that the altar of content seems to have prevailed. I patiently await the revolt of media against the connived plot of Form and Content. After all, without media there is no form and content.

In the works on display, from the discards of computer electronic boards, canned beverages drink bottom, metal pieces, saxophone and boggle horns bars, one can invoke a cosmopolitan associated junkyard as source for the studio explorations. Their use within the compositional format showcases Balogun's depth for orderliness and aesthetic rightness. Yet one must attest that the artist is a slave to society whose bidding as register and recorder role he/she must fulfill.

By this exhibition, Balogun has once more served the outcome of his studio forage for our delight and enjoyment. As audience, patrons and critics, the works will definitely hit us from different perspectives, but they remain absolutely true to themselves in their mission of expressing society. Within the gamut of this reality, Balogun's rummage around in unfathomable depths of the junkyard has ingeniously birthed new media and possibilities as "Rare Species". His audacious authority in studio mastery cannot be glossed over. I therefore congratulate him and salute his courage.

**Professor Nelson Edewor** (FSNA)  
*President, Sculptors Association of Nigeria (ScAN)*



Detail view from "A Body in Motion I", 2021

## TRANSMOGRIFICATION

Philosophy has always been defined and described as the essence of life and of course, characterised by arguments on the basis of the purpose of existence. Hence, the study of all matters and their relation to environment, including their interactions with one another as well as interactions with their environment. This therefore, imposes *visual art* on the standard as fundamental medium of expressive communication in aesthetics. In every aspect of communication, the target is meaning-seeking and meaning-making which has been scored as the fundamental basis for human and material interaction in society and environment. However, the wonder of this experience in expression, formalized in the *visual art*, is encased within the universality and *multiversality* of art at same time. One may argue for art as a universal language in terms of communication, but from a semiotic view, what makes sense in one context may not be meaningful in another, hence, the need for interpretation.

Signature Beyond, since inception in 1990, through several group and solo art exhibitions, has offered the *uterine wall* quite friendly to the development of art interpretation in Lagos and London. Through this current exhibition therefore, titled *Transmogrification*, in partnership with Adeola Musliu Balogun, an artist per experience in excellence with a PhD in Sculpture, the goal is to cross breed *experience* with *environment* bearing in mind the set target of achieving a hybrid *formula* in artistic expression with a soft landing on the cushion of *social-political engineering* targeted at human prosperity, globally.

Sculpture has always been defined as the process and art of forming real things in experience, and by implication, a medium of transmogrification, but in the case of this fine artist, the concept seems to query the conventional methods and materials; protesting the detachment of many artists from their *identitarian environment* as expected to reflect in their work.

Balogun is inspired by time, significant to human and material development as well as technological degeneration of the times, hence, uses found and discarded objects as well as scraps from broken electronics as raw materials for creating mixed media sculptural forms. His work, *Hooked*, from the series, *Electrifying*, which is an exploration of mixed media in painting, for instance, is evident to his protest against the negative effects of the *tech age* on the ecological value of the planet, hinging on the *safety* of humanity and environment.

To art Collectors, Patrons and all art seers present, welcome to *Transmogrification*, a visual dinner globally served.

Happy viewing!

**Ike, Chiemezie Gerald**

*Artist / Art Diplomat*

## Exploration of Materials possibilities

Discarded or found objects though generally considered to have seemingly lost their primary usefulness are laced with a robust history of previous usefulness pulsating with immense possibilities. These possibilities are of immense intrigue for exploration to me. Aside from the environmental consciousness and responsibility involved in attending to materials lying in wake, I consider it important to collaborate with the environment by reviving the encountered materials in a process of 'rebirth' that imbues them with new meaning in relation to my subject of concern. They become new life in the environment that housed their old lives. The subject matter in my work is typically steeped in interrogating existential questions and challenges that make up our social navigation. This is usually spurred by personal experiences and memories which here culminate in the concept themed: **"Labyrinthine Morphology"**.

My creative trajectory straddles diverse media, processes, and concepts in sifting and espousing the essence of the morphing of my subject. In this regard, discarded objects, such as metal scraps, rubber tyres, horseshoes, and sundry discarded materials are explored to engage subjects as diverse as socio-political, culture, nature, humanity, and survival in multi-layered dimensions.

Recently recurring in my creative explorations is the employment of electronic panels. These are engaged through their characteristic of being integral components in technology and here applied as a universal metaphor that highlights the profound impact of contemporary material waste. This disposal by the modern man could be deployed lethally or benevolently. Technology defines the quantum advancement and sophistication of the modern man in various aspects of life. The waste produced and its use of it implies the influence and impact of the materials in the life of modern man. This body of work is centered on metaphorical associations that also reference the living conditions these materials come along with and the gaping contradictions in society through technological influence.

My technique of exploring each material is usually informed by its nature and morphology; could be additive, subtractive, or combined. I also follow trajectories that my explorations open for me. I follow the concern about what is next in manipulating and exploring what I am working with. Each work is usually a gateway into a new narrative and vista. In reference to content, a wide spectrum of

influence matters contributes to my self-imposed explorative tasks which include people, places, books, music, myth, folklore, and encountered material itself.

My mixed media paintings draw profoundly from elements on both sides of a typical electronic panel. They are created through the appropriation of selected photographed sections of my sculptures infused with electronic panels; this is thereafter digitally printed on the desired ground and worked upon. The tracks or circuit traces on the reverse side of electronic panels are adapted as motifs on the dark backgrounds of each piece. The motifs, depending on the ground can be engraved, embossed, or lacerated with a drilling machine, acrylic, or plasma cutter, respectively. The images in my mixed media paintings are deployed to reference the notion of the profoundness and overwhelming impact of technology on the activities of modern man.

### **Transmogrification: A Brief Overview:**

Science and technology are two phenomena that have profoundly revolutionized our human experiences. Their impacts continue to manifest in leaps and bounds in myriads of human consciousness. Unprecedented achievements are being recorded in various fields of human endeavours through technological advancements and breakthroughs. Electronic gadgets of different sizes and functions are being designed and deployed into taking care of various aspects of human needs. A wide technological sphere from nanotechnology to artificial intelligence (AI) and more has come to alter our existential experiences in unique ways which may or may not be entirely beneficial. Tech in its many forms such as the World Wide Web (WWW) and Cyber-space have become a phenomenon in numerous facets of human interactions. The internet has evolved from an extension of traditional media into its distinct realm. It is an attestation to the capacity of human development however it is not devoid of its sore points.

This presentation highlights how technology in this context has affected us individually and collectively as users in an evolving world where activity and navigation become more and more dependent on technology. Electronic gadgets are awesome as they have seemingly made us "superhuman". The internet however has engulfed our psyche beyond our threshold; it has transcended what anybody could have predicted. The profoundness of the impact of the internet can be felt in different facets of our lives – it is a treasure



trove in one hand and a landmine in another. Life without the intervention of various technological devices is better imagined, covertly or overtly, humanity is fast becoming "enslaved" by them. We have been transmogrified. Regardless of the quantum positive impacts of modern technology, it has also surreptitiously assumed the status of affliction. It is fast becoming a hydra-headed monster as the application of electronic gadgets is fraught with latent traps with dire consequences to users. Nothing compares to lounging in your comfort zone to carry out a business transaction via internet-compliant devices but the catch is that a non-tech savvy individual could easily fall prey in the hands of prowling internet fraudsters. In this way, many life savings and businesses have been unwittingly wiped out or destroyed.

Transmogrification seeks to interrogate the notion of the human condition and social realism as influenced by technology/electronic gadgets. This is also in relation to drawing attention to the effects of consumerism as informed by e-waste being engaged as a medium of critiquing in a multilayered dimension. My body of work in this show will draw strength from the theme and emphasize the unique application of electronic panels as a veritable sculpture medium.

**Adeola Balogun** Ph.D



Adeola Balogun in the studio working mood

## Adeola Balogun's Sublime Transmogrified Oeuvre

### Introduction

There are many artists in Lagos, Nigeria, but very few are successful master artists or became renowned as an artist and lecturer in our artistic landscape and globally. Adeola Balogun is one of the few successful Nigerian artists and lecturer of note in Nigeria. This success story started in 1995, a year after he graduated from Yaba College of Technology (YabaTech) with Higher National Diploma (HND), specializing in Sculpture in 1994. Balogun also did his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at YabaTech. Thus, he became a lecturer at his alma mater in 1995 after his National Youth Service. After his HND, He also has a Master of Fine Art (MFA) degree (Sculpture) in 2004 from the University of Benin as well as a Ph.D. Studio Art (Sculpture) from Delta State University, Nigeria, in 2020. From 2020 till date in 2022, Balogun is presently the Head of Department, Fine Art, School of Art, Design and Printing at Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. He is a Chief Lecturer in the institution.

Balogun's artistic success story started in 1995 because that was the year that some of his artwork was first noticed and collected by Engr. Yemisi Shyllon. Shyllon is a foremost Nigerian art collector and probably the ultimate art patron in Africa. Balogun explained how his journey with Engr. Yemisi Shyllon started in 1995, he bought his five works (four during the show's preview and the fifth at the exhibition proper) during that year's YabaTech art exhibition of the School's art lecturers held at Russian Cultural Centre, Ikoyi, Lagos, packaged by Prof. Rukeme Noserime (then HOD Fine Art), who later introduced him to Shyllon as the young artist who did the artworks that strongly tickle his fancy. Shyllon later gave Balogun his business card and encouraged him to visit him at his Niger Rite office in Ikeja, Lagos, back then<sup>1</sup>.

After the show, Lara Ige-Jacks, encouraged him to visit Shyllon because he asked about him from her during her last visit to Shyllon in his office. Thus, Balogun paid Shyllon a visit in his office, which marked the beginning of a brighter fulfilling future between a major art patron (Shyllon) and the young artist, now a master artist, Balogun. It was during one of his other subsequent visits to Shyllon that he took Balogun on a breakfast visit to another major art patron, Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi (late), that same year, 1995<sup>2</sup>. Shyllon has the largest collection of Balogun's realistic figure sculptures in bronze and glass fibre, among others, thus; he is one of Adeola Balogun's major art patrons. From 1995 till date, Engr. Yemisi Shyllon had contributed greatly to the establishment of Adeola Balogun as a renowned contemporary Nigerian artist without blemish<sup>3</sup>. Without blemish because despite Balogun's unimposing and pleasant mien, he is without any iota of doubt, a hardworking artistic genius.

From his school/ group exhibition of 1995 till date in 2021, Balogun has several solo and group exhibitions to his name. Apart from Nigeria, Balogun have also exhibited in Kenya, Sweden, the USA, England, and UAE, among other countries abroad. Though he specialized in sculpture, Balogun also draw and paint coupled with his mixed media and multimedia works or repurposed/ hybrid sculptures, which attested to his eclectic artistic nature. A positive art adventurism standard that he has exhibited in his different shows through the years. Transmogrification is Balogun's latest artistic cuisine that further testified to his diverse creative dexterity and ingenuity.

Adeola Balogun's artistic peregrination from realistic sculptural figures to stylized and quasi-realistic metal as well as rubber cum tire-dynamic sculptures were legion, well collected, and treasured. His metallurgical sculptural mastery led him on to abstracted musical instruments that inspired hybrid and repurposed sculptures. Thereafter, appeared the cuboid, crescent, and globular bowl twisted abstract steel and coloured metal-induced sculptural period, which gave way to mixed media and multimedia paintings and drawings, as well as hybrid/ repurposed sculptures in a contemporaneous creative odyssey classified as Transmogrification. Thus, Transmogrification is Balogun's creative/ artistic exploration coupled with eclectic spontaneity from one finesse age to a superb period that yielded a sublime oeuvre of creative dexterity and diversity in an aesthetic finale.

Balogun's latest creative feast for the art community revealed the joy of diversity and dexterity as formally expressed in the works. He will be showing mixed media paintings and drawings, hybrid and repurposed sculptures, among others, in Transmogrification.

### Balogun's Transmogrification Classified

Classification was first started by Olodumare (Almighty God), He created humans and divided them into different races and ethnic groups in different geographical locations and continents with different languages and cultures. Likewise in art history/ critical evaluation, works of art are divided or classified based on formal and contextual analysis.

Balogun's recent works of art, 32 works, will be classified into six groups based on formal and contextual/ material exploration as the case maybe. The six classifications are Head Series (6 works), Power Play (8 works), Spirituality (3 works), Music and Dance (7 works), Labyrinthine Morphology (4 works), and Fishes (4 works).



### Analysis of Artwork

Head Series six works are “Fela Inspiration”, “Dominance I, II and III”, “My Pony Tail”, and “Iron Horse”. The eight artworks under Power Play are “The Head that Wears the Crown”, “Where is the Emir”, “Wired”, “Hooked” and “Hooked to Online II”, “AI”, “Encapsulated”, and “Deadly Crown”. Spirituality has three works, namely; “Man and Spirit in Vanity”, “Transcendence” and “Meditation”. Seven works belonged to Music and Dance, they are “Dance Gyration I, II and III”, “Guitar Soundspiration I and II” as well as “Sounds and Signs I and II”. Labyrinthine Morphology has four works, they are “Labyrinthine Morphology I, II, III, and IV”. “Rare Species I, II, III, and IV” are the four works in Fishes.

All the mixed media on paper artworks were produced in 2020, and they are in two different sizes. If the sizes of the works are not 18 x 24 inches, they will be 27 x 21 inches. For example; “Deadly Crown”, “Transcendence”, “Meditation”, and “Hooked”, among others, are 18 x 24 inches works, while “Dominance I and II”, “Wired” “Iron Horse”, “Encapsulated”, and “AI”, among others, are 27 x 21 inches art pieces.

While the two-dimension work sizes for the show are limited to two different sizes, the sizes of the hybrid sculptures that will be displayed are as varied as they come. “Where is the Emir”, 102 x 85 x 27 inches, is the biggest hybrid sculpture among the exhibits. The second-largest sculpture is “Rare Specie III”, 97 x 78 x 22 inches. It is also the biggest of the four fish-inspired series that will be on display. “Sounds and Signs II”, 66 x 45 x 8 inches, comes in the related size of sculptures in this genre of formal finishing.

### Head Series

The head in traditional African belief has both physical and spiritual coupled with psychological interpretation and connotation. The head is not just about the skull, brain, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, jaws, hairs, and whatever is visible or subjected to reality to mankind. Spiritually or metaphysically, the head is the site of wisdom and knowledge as well as the symbolic essence of one's destiny. It embodied and represent the spiritual before the physical essence of humans. It is believed that one should give more realistic and symbolic/ spiritual significance to the head, even before worshipping or according respect to deities in traditional African religion. Man or woman must be on good terms with his/ her head, since; one's destiny, which is symbolized by the head, is everything in life. Physically, if the head dies, the whole body dies. If anything good or bad happens to the head, it

will affect the whole body. The aforementioned facts reveal the importance of the head to humans and other creatures. Thus, Balogun used his conscious and unconscious Head Series to creatively and artistically comment on the significance of the head to mankind.

As noticed in Balogun's “Fela Inspiration”, he employed a translucent-like/ reflective silhouette form of the head of the late iconic Afro-Beat music founder and genius, Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938-1997), to visually discuss and recount his virtuoso musical supremacy and sociopolitical as well as human right historical vibrancy and inspirational stance that seems to be lacking in contemporary Nigeria of the 21st century<sup>4</sup>. Nigeria is presently in dire need of Fela's inspirational satires and ingenious melodies as well as commentaries on the maladies of Nigeria towards a better nation and continent, Africa. Fela was a Pan-Africanist and traditionalist of note, thus; “Fela Inspiration” by Balogun is definitely a clarion call to our heroes past and present to help us out in whatever form in our quest and umpteenth desire for a better country, continent, and world. But, surely we all know that ‘God helps those who help themselves’. Government is the people and vice versa. Nigeria and Nigerians had better start doing the right things to improve and reduce the rot in the society before it is too late.

“Dominance I and II” are visual commentaries on the unique significance of the head to symbolize the essence of a man or woman as well as other creatures. In the two mixed media works, Balogun tried to honour a late senior colleague, Nsikak Essien (1957-2020), from a holistic perspective of good deeds in life being worthy of celebration than a history of success with blood stains and terrible tales of malevolent deeds<sup>5</sup>. Essien was a great and reputable Nigerian artistic genius that one can be proud of. Balogun used Essien in a symbolic silhouette form with electronic panels just like in “Fela Inspiration” to create a unique image that shows his creative diversity in reference to Essien's painterly and mixed media/ multimedia dexterity during his lifetime. “Dominance I and II” were employed by Balogun as an artistic statement that we should celebrate the superb creatives, and worthy others, among us while they are still alive. “Dominance III” follows the same creative sequence as in “Dominance I and II”, though not as artistically dominating as the first two. While “Dominance I” is a back view translucent-like portrayal of the head and torso, “Dominance II” is a front view silhouette inspired formal depiction of the head and torso, whereas “Dominance III” is a translucent-like side view artistic juxtaposed image of the head and torso. The three works are focused on the human head from a holistic to specific perspective; whether physical, psychological or spiritual. They formally and contextually dwell on the symbolic significance of the human head.

“My Pony Tail” dwells on women's beauty as expressed and captured in their different hairdos. Since the hair is one of the crowning glory of a lady's beautiful head (with apologies to the timeless beauty, Queen Nefertiti of ancient Egypt. In ancient Egypt, a lady is considered a paragon of beauty if she is still adjudged as beautiful after revealing her scalp without any hair), Balogun used “My Pony Tail” to stylistically express this accepted fact on the aesthetic relevance of luxuriant hair to timeless beauties through the ages. Whether among humans or animals, the head comes with the same physical and spiritual significance and power, thus; Balogun depicted the “Iron Horse” to reflect the above fact. The 'Iron Horse' is also about strength, speed, and power that are key attributes of horses in the real world.

Apart from “Dominance I, II, and III”, the other artworks have curvilinear motifs that represent the electric current of life in humans, which linked us to the electronic panel prints that Balogun added to the colours and forms in all the works. They are mostly two-dimension mixed media artworks without any distractive cumbersome details.

#### Power Play

Whether traditional or political office holders of high ranks, it is all about power, position, and authority to control and influence people and society. “Deadly Crown” is a visual commentary and documentation on the deadly Covid-19 pandemic<sup>6</sup>. A virus infection that shook the whole world to its foundation. It led to a global lockdown for the first time in over a century. The year, 2020, was the high Covid-19 year of lockdown. Mankind is better off now, though with some minor cases and a new variant of the virus still being discovered. Mankind is in control of it in 2022, which is the submission in the work as captured by the interesting colours employed by Balogun in the work. “Deadly Crown” is also a coded reminder of the deadly power play on the lives of billions of people on Earth by some powerful people, politicians, and billionaires as well as scientists because like the AIDS virus that started in the early 1980s, the Covid-19 virus seems to be another deadly power play from some evil people for specific reasons. It was simply a devilish power play.

"Wired" is a picture of an electric wired head without any semblance of reality because the head seems to be taken over by the advanced world of electronic, science, cyberspace, and online/ digital reality. "Hooked" and "Hooked to Online II" are a continuation of "Wired". They dwell on the lives of people who cannot do

without the internet daily because they are always online for one thing or the other. Thus, they are hooked to online, wired, and electronic reality or artificial intelligence (AI) reality. "AI" means 'Artificial Intelligence' which is the basics of the online/ internet and computer world that most people on earth are wired into and hooked onto daily for our survival, revival, and artificial bliss and reality. "Encapsulated" focuses on the same story of electronic, cyberspace, and scientific metaphorical enslavement.

In “Wired”, “Hooked”, “Hooked to Online II”, “AI” and “Encapsulated”, Balogun is revealing to humans that computers/ AI, cyberspace/ internet, android phones/ iPhones, iPads, and other electronic/ scientific aided advance human engaging gadgets and instruments are exerting a powerful influence over us. Therefore, these aforementioned gadgets and instruments are overtly or covertly controlling the way we think, work and live our lives... Humans must wake up and live.

"The Head that Wears the Crown" is a social commentary on the traditional or even political office holders because they became rulers with specific power structures based on what are destined to be. It is also a celebration of ancient Ife art (12th – 15th century) and power because Balogun re-create an old Ife art bronze head of a king to contemporaneously execute this mixed media work. The work metaphorically focuses on traditional as well as political power. The crowned Ife head of a king in the work is a symbol of royal power, second only to the gods.

The power play that happened in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria, whereby Emir Sanusi Lamido Sanusi was dethroned in 2020 by the State Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, and another prince of Kano was turbaned as the new Emir; was the contextual reality and inspiration for the work, “Where is the Emir”<sup>7</sup>. The work is a hybrid sculpture of metal, steel, and electronic panels that were used to produce a stylized but quasi-realistic regal black stallion with the paraphernalia of royalty and power being further expressed with colours and glitz derived from the repurposed electronic panels employed as regal covering and accouterments for the horse. But, the powerful owner/ rider, which is the Emir was missing in the composition; hence the title, “Where is the Emir. It is a sublime hybrid sculpture with repurposed finishing from Balogun's variety of creative oeuvre. Unlike other works in this group that are mixed media paintings/drawings with forms and linear motifs of curvilinear and para-linear expressions, “Where is the Emir” is a standard sculptural masterpiece, which is one of many from Balogun's creative armory.



### Spirituality

The spiritual essence of man is very important to human existence and survival. Man is a trinity; the body, spirit, and soul make up a complete human. The three must be in harmony for man's spirituality to be strong and successful in good accord with God. The three artworks in this class are an attempt by Balogun to reflect on the spiritual side of his reality and human spiritual encounters as well as kindred spirits and souls.

Therefore, "Man and Spirit in Vanity" visually discuss the unending selfish craving and goals of humans that will only bring physical pleasure without any spiritual gain coupled with negative psychological impact. It is a warning that 'man is nothing without God', it is only through spiritual advancement and benevolent deeds that all vain glories will be wiped out from one's life slate. "Meditation" is a translucent-like human form in a silent prayerful lotus position, in deep meditation to unite the trinity (body, spirit, and soul) that made up man into one better functioning entity. If "Meditation" is the physical beginning of the spiritual journey, then "Transcendence" is the glorious achievement of spiritual ascendancy because it is a state of physical and spiritual fulfillment. "Transcendence" is a socio-religious visual statement by Balogun that success will always be the lot of hard and diligent workers, who can persevere from the beginning, "Meditation", to the end, "Transcendence".

While "Man and Spirit in Vanity" is a translucent standing full figure of a man or woman, "Meditation" and "Transcendence" are also translucent-like human forms in the lotus positions, trying to spiritually improve their essential self. The three works have kinetic linear currents, either as curvilinear or para-linear motifs in colours of red, blue, green, gray, or black; over patches of whites, grays, or black colours as an interplay of both negative and positive spaces in the three mixed media artworks. Thus, the backgrounds and the foregrounds in the artworks were uniquely balanced in superb control of contrast and rhythmic employment of forms, lines, and colours resulting in these three aesthetically interesting works.

### Music and Dance

All work and no play is dangerous to our health, both physical and spiritual, that is why Balogun produced the "Dance Gyration I, II, and III". Balogun used these aforementioned three mixed-media works to visually capture the dynamic spirit of dance in a quasi-realistic female formal expression with a subjective undertone of translucent-like simplicity and transmogrified finesse. The finishing of the three

mixed media artworks also has the translucent-like formal and linear palettes coupled with the merging of the white and black or grayish backgrounds with the foregrounds as well as the main expressive content in the compositions. "Dance Gyration III" has images of more pronounced electrical panels and other accouterments that symbolized the essence of dance as well as musical instruments in the work.

Musical instruments are needed to perform the music that will warrant and dictate the type of dance that will follow. Some musical instruments inspired works in this collection are "Guitar Soundspiration I and II" as well as "Sounds and Signs I and II". These works filled the creative space for the musical effects, allusions, and illusions needed before or after the dance. While "Guitar Soundspiration I and II" are mixed media with translucent-like guitar forms, and linear motifs with a similar palette to other previously discussed mixed media in this critique, "Sounds and Signs I and II" are hybrid sculptures with musical instruments, steel, electronic panels, and other objects were creatively repurposed to produce the two sublime abstract sculptures. These two sculptures are recreated and re-brewed old wines that get better with age; in new bottles with reminiscence and enduring flavor that enhance the creative mastery, music, and dance in contemporary Nigerian art and times.

### Labyrinthine Morphology

This is Balogun's creative dialogue with his tools and life experience, which he expressed in mixed media paintings, but, more abstracted than his previous mixed media in this show. They are four abstract series with the same title; "Labyrinthine Morphology I, II, III, and IV". In these compositions, black linear drawings of abstracted shapes or forms, surreal or quasi-realistic as well as realistic expressions were superimposed on coloured and printed backgrounds. In "Labyrinthine Morphology I", the shape of a seminude lady from a front view with raised hands in black linear expression was surreptitiously drawn over a colourful background print with various tones of grays and blacks as well as abstract lines expertly linking the foreground with the background. "Labyrinthine Morphology I" appears more exquisite than "Labyrinthine Morphology II, III, and IV". The latter three are more subjective and abstracted in their formal finishing, with an intriguing contextual overview in their formal conclusions. The forms and compositions in the four works, whether in the colours or black and gray lines as well as shapes are diverse, freer, more engaging, and interesting. They are unique experimental pieces from Balogun's studio.

Fishes

Fishes abound in the marine world. The numerous beautiful fishes, in reality, must have inspired Balogun to produce these magnanimously huge rare fishes in his body of work. They are four hybrid sculptures with the same title; “Rare Specie I, II, III, and IV”, another series from Balogun. They are peculiar and interesting sculptures made from repurposed items and objects such as steel, stainless steel, electronic panels, and brass bowl, among others. Some fishes such as the goldfishes and lady fishes, among others, must have been on Balogun's mind when he was executing his rare species sculptures. These fish sculptural pieces are another set of Balogun's wonderful re-visitation of themes with superb contemporary finishing.

Conclusion

Adeola Balogun is a renowned Nigerian sculptor prior to this exhibition, but his unique mixed media and multimedia paintings/ drawings in this show revealed how he has successfully expanded his creative scope, thereby, proclaiming his dexterous ingenuity and mastery. He keeps pushing the limit of his creative frontier and artistic oeuvre with ease. His new innovative paintings (mixed media) and hybrid sculptures of rebranded themes and repurposed expressive contents are superb works of art that are worth their weight in diamond and gold for any classy and worthy art collector across the globe. It is indeed a pleasure that Adeola Balogun's sublime transmogrified oeuvre becomes a reality for the art community to behold and enjoy. Happy viewing...

Rasheed Amodu

Artist, Art Historian/ Critic

Note

1. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 12, 2022.
2. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 12, 2022.
3. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 15, 2022.
4. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 15, 2022.
5. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 15, 2022.
6. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 17, 2022.
7. Personal Communication with Adeola Balogun, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, January 17, 2022.



## The Message Is Intensified

Dr. Adeola Balogun's latest offering - latest in his series of clearly themed and experimental exhibitions - is determined to give a much louder voice to visual expressions for which he has gained considerable prominence.

First of all, he completely destroys the traditional barrier dividing the regions of fine arts, defying distinctions between painter, sculptor, ceramicist, colourist etc. And it has been long in coming. In an interview given some years back, he introduced himself simply as a visual artist. That meant all-rounder, someone able to speak in visual languages not a few. It is like the writer who rejects the appellation of poet, novelist or dramatist, or an international citizen who straddles multiple national boundaries as a native in everyone.

That open field is defined not in words only but also by the outcomes of his creative adventures. And I find in this latest outing the boldest or loudest acclamation of his creative consciousness so far.

First he employs found objects in two dimensional and multidimensional metal constructions. Many pieces are framed as wall hangings, as though they were framed painted works. We are compelled to recall that Balogun is sometimes also a painter. He has actually exhibited paintings or been mistaken for a painter in a solitary sense! And that is only the beginning of it. He has explored discarded pneumatic tyre, wood, ceramics, cement concrete as well as terracotta. Aspects of the regular steel creations are sometimes dubbed in brilliant paint or burnished to present remarkable objects of beauty.

We recall very well that the core materials are waste - metal or other materials which are repurposed. In this genre of art, materials are on their second journeys of usefulness having served their original essence before they were discarded. The message of waste to wealth is taken much further to stress that the second coming of the material is by far more significant and more imbued with meaning and value than the first! I mean, in practical terms, what were the original market values of the objects as erstwhile commodities compared to their current market standing at an exhibition or auction?

On the front of their social signification, what says that someone who fell cannot yet stand up? And who dares to suggest that the glory of the latter house shall - not - be greater than the former?

So we are amazed to find the new placement of the spent item in the artistic construct. It is assigned a dominant or minor role like the dramatis personae in a theatrical spectacle. It plays with other materials, and they can be wood or jute

material, even textile or copper aluminum. Together they perform to render the overall installation a pleasurable or enjoyable entity.

The artist sees to it that we can recognise each contributing material to the totality whether it be a fish or a horse or bull, or simply a whimsical concept.

This set of offerings being exhibited are duly an intensification of Balogun's progressive engagement on three main levels. These are form, scale and application.

Take forms like the fish or the musical installation for example. Even the bull rears her beautiful head here, or her torso or full frame through a sister form, the horse. Balogun does not mind taking us through visual narratives that we may like to think we are already familiar with, only to discover that we are left marooned on a conceptual island! Some have a distinctly comical edge with a small bite of sarcasm. Among these are My Pony Tail, belonging to a series of two dimensional mixed media works even if dominated by steel. There are painting strokes on the back panels in this whole series resulting in a complete visual enigma. There is also a very generous deployment of the mother boards of the computer, festooned with computer connectors and wires. This computer intestine is now an evanescent feature of a majority of Balogun's recent works.

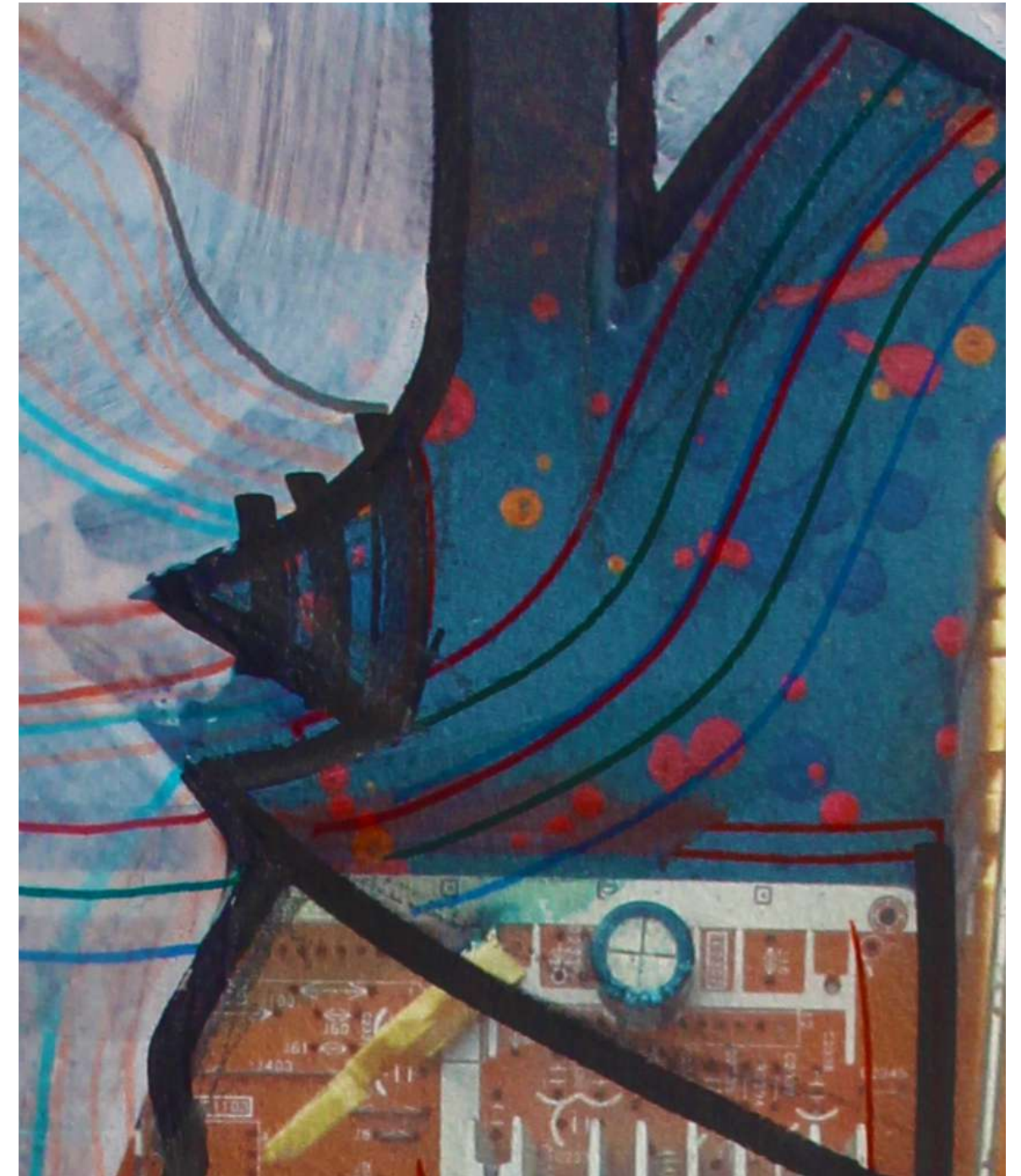
The collected female hair flowing backways perfectly resembles the tail of the stallion, with an underlay of commentary on feminine exuberance. The same goes for the piece Hooked where a figure is fixated on a mobile phone. An indirect trope about those texting and driving or those hooked on electronic devices all the day long. Uneasy Lies the Head replicates the form of the famous Ife bronze head. A captivating piece indeed but can we possibly forget that the bronze is actually a representation of the Ooni, the powerful Yoruba monarch? Or that the current Ooni was spiked a lot in the media recently? That allusion is confirmed by the title of the piece! It is not my intention to explore every piece; we must allow the viewer to do that for herself or himself!

The scale or sheer size of some of the pieces are simply unbelievable, but very welcome. Take the fish in the denomination of three pieces that is newly featured for example. Not only are the pieces remarkable in their composition but curious as well as exciting in the deployment of materials. They astutely fuse into the cosmos of each composition. The third piece in a series entitled Rare Species Series is totally outsized. Materials here resemble ornaments that bear witness to their overall visual accomplishment.

I personally enjoyed a view of the artist putting finishing touches to this gargantuan in the series, which is taller and larger than the sculptor himself! Let me also observe that the materials are varied, sometimes disagreeable - even as fragile items harmonize with core steel for example. There is possibly an underlying message about this application as well. It is the character of this show. It is also the sum of it. The artist speaks in more pronounced tones.

There are new themes and fresh statements. He deals with more contemporary problems often by highlighting them. And old themes are vested with a new garb.

Dapo Adeniyi



Detail view from "The Head That Wears The Crown", 2020



## FORM AND MATERIAL TECHNOLOGY IN MODERN NIGERIAN ART: A Prolegomenon of Adeola Balogun's Labyrinthine Morphology, His Visual Innovations and Explorations as Salient Experimentation

### Exordium

*“Art is born out of the observation and investigation of nature”*

*-Marcus Tullius Cicero*

*“I write these words in steel for anything else  
not set in metal cannot be trusted”*

*-Brandon Sanderson*

*“A world which sees art and engineering  
as divided is not seeing the world as a whole”*

*-Professor. Sir. Edmund Hoppold*

*“Sculpture is the art of intelligence”*

*-Pablo Picasso*

The history of true experimental art (mixed-media) involving the use of found objects dates back to the aesthetic theories of Wassily Kandinsky and other relationships to the (1887-1948) in his work titled, “Opened by Customs” (a Collage work, 1938) Fate Gallery, reveals the early entrance of found objects into modern painting. Kurt Schwitzer was influenced initially by cubism. He created his own form of Dada at Hanover, during the 1920's and called it “merz”, using such materials as tickets, feathers, cork and wood, he produced collages and constructions transfigured by his imagination. Kurt was German. After 1918, German painting turned either to political and social commitment or expression.<sup>1</sup>

The very exciting thing about waste art for the artist and his or her audience, as opined by Orimolade<sup>2</sup> is that; there is a plethora of materials, mediums and possibilities in creative production, anything and everything is a potential material source the boundaries of size, weight shape and other innumerable rules and transcended, and the wide range of materials broadens the span of audience appreciation, there is something for everybody depending on their disposition and taste. It leaves an avenue for suspense in expectancy from the audience.<sup>2</sup>

In Nigeria, the situation portends an interesting visual premise. The development of experimental art (mixed-media) is traced to the early 1970's and this was consolidated in the late 1970's. Progenitors of this visual blaze, include; Erabor Emokpae, Bruce Onobrakpeya, David Herbert Dale, Chucks Anyanwu, Kolade Oshinowo, Ray Soko, Inyang Nse-Abasi, Paul Ejukorlem, Saibu Buhari, Innocent Odeka, Rukeme Noserime, Anidi Obiora, Toni Anthony Ogunde, Kunle Adeyemi, Edwin Inyang and a host few others. The predilection for relief painting became a vogue, a trait linked to the early experimentations of the late Erabor Emokpae. He used patterned low reliefs, made from vinyl materials in painting. Kolade Oshinowo introduced with penchant details, tactile sensations with the use of serviette paper, carefully glued in uniform or uniformed formations. He further introduced the conte' and charcoal in creating cloisonnistic effects, reminiscent of Paul Gauguin in his paintings. Chuks Anyanwu (late), another painter and bold artist who introduced Bas-relief sculpture into his paintings. The Bas-relief was achieved with the use of epoxy-resin and cement in malleable form.

Kolade Oshinowo's techniques were later imbibed by his students and this became a bedrock and visual inspiration for further mixed-media inquiries. Toni Anthony Ogunde, a student of Kolade Oshinowo, mastered over the years the use of jute and he carved a niche for himself, with this material (jute is a natural fiber, made from the bark of a tree also known as jute', that grows especially in the Brahmaputra River valley of present-day Bangladesh). Ogunde, also uses various found objects in his paintings; depending on his thematic expression and parameter.

Adeola Balogun, having witnessed all these visual metamorphosis, most especially in Lagos State; where he is domiciled, was apt in adapting new frontiers into his sculptural works, prior to his graduation. I have had ample opportunities in writing many visual deconstructions on his works, and hitherto; each exhibition

has revealed new trends in terms of exploration and innovation, which he often utilizes in his visual deliberations, vis-à-vis his die-hard experimentations. He is a visual artist, who manipulates and uses diverse materials with so much boldness, fecundity and accuracy in creating shapes and forms, which invariably become alive, aligning with nature or the immediate environment. There is always a communion between his works and the immediate domiciled ecology.

#### **Form and Material Technology in his Labyrinthine Morphology**

In form and material technology; the visual artist is often exposed and guided in the exploration of indigenous and conventional qualities of materials utilized for his or her visual art processes. This often helps to explicate their dexterity (mastery) in the use of these materials in enhancing, the comprehension of forms and materials; enabling the visual artist to: know the strength and weakness of materials, have the knowledge in constraint analysis, explore and utilize indigenous materials as artworks, have the ability or creative propensity to innovate independently and to acquire the skill to design ideas and find solutions that are innovative and enterprising; aligned to the domiciled indigenous cultural affinities and available entities.<sup>9</sup> Balogun has explored and used various materials at his disposal. Some as found objects and aptly referred to as waste art by Orimolade (2011 02), does not mean all his experimental works are found objects. This is where I disagree with many scholars. The present day Nigerian visual artist; though more conspicuous among sculptors, often times predetermine many utility objects needed to align with their envisaged forms or shapes in their deliberations. Balogun uses diverse materials, from found objects to predetermine objects, that will align with each creative work. This alone, requires enormous vision and thought forms for an appropriate composition to be achieved. These are the rudiments of exploration, which leads to innovations, and when consolidated; it evolves into a successful viable and salient visual experimentation.

Visual experimentations often create a curio sensation in any milieu...one may ask? because it is ever unique, exotic, votive and with lots of allegorical connotations. What exudes from this visual phenomenon, is what Orimolade (2011) refers to as a visual suspense in experimentations.

This sculptors' material is diverse in compositional formats and dimensions; either in the organic or inorganic; he utilizes them to fulfill or attain his inner premonitions. He is a master of various types of metals, ranging from iron (mainly ferrous based), wrought iron, steel (which contains carbon in any amount up to about 1.7 percent as an essential alloying constituent, and it is malleable when under suitable conditions, and is distinguished from cast iron by its malleability and lower carbon content.<sup>10</sup> Steel is often less corrosive to weather, hence its advantage (over time-phase in rusting). There was a period he explored and experimented successfully using the solid and air pneumatic tires. Pneumatic tires consist of synthetic rubber, natural rubber, fabric, wire and some chemical compounds, often mixed in certain proportions with carbon black. They are flexible, durable, heat resistant, water resistant and possess lots of traction qualities. Balogun took a salient advantage of these properties in using the pneumatic tires in creating monumental indoor and out-door sculptures.

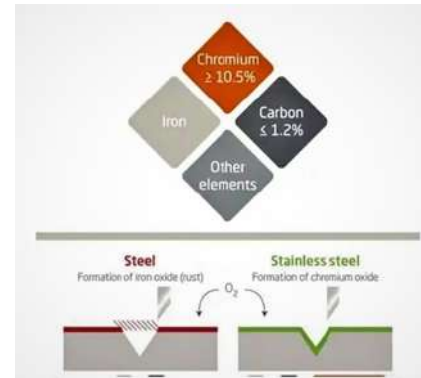
Balogun is a master of the metal. He works with the various metal types; ranging from stainless steel (an alloy of steel with chromium and sometimes another element –such as nickel or molybdenum) which is practically immune to rusting and ordinary corrosion. He is a constant friend to brass (an alloy consisting essentially of copper and zinc in variable proportions. His visual romance with bronze (an alloy of copper and tin, with other elements) is often seen in most of his metal assemblages. Iron and the wrought iron are readily available to his advantage too. The wrought iron is a type of iron, often very tough, malleable, and relatively soft. It contains less than 0.3 percent and is usually less than 0.1 percent carbon, and has 1 to 2 percent of slag mechanically mixed with it.<sup>10</sup>



Elements	Weight percenta
Carbon	0.08
Manganese	2.00
Phosphorus	0.045
Sulphar	0.030
Silicon	0.75
Chromium	16.0-18.0
Nickel	10.0-14.0
Nitrogen	0.10
Molybdenum	2.0-3.0

The material specifications are	
Material	: 316 Austenitic stainless steel
Thickness	: 3 mm
Length	: 100mm
Number of samples	: 27

*Chemical Composition of Stainless Steel. Cited.<sup>13</sup>*

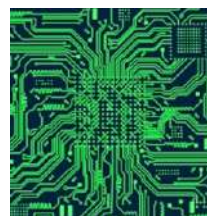


*Comparison of Steel and Stainless Steel. Cited<sup>21</sup>*

The scope of this study is on Adeola Balogun's current exhibition, with the aim of revealing his resent and diverse experimentations; which reveal a profusion or are permeated in the use of discarded Printed Circuit Boards (PCB) and in most cases, the Electronic Circuit Boards (ECB). The main difference between these two terms is that PCB, refers mainly to a blank circuitry board, while the ECB refers to a board that contains all the necessary electronic components for the board to function as needed. These boards are used to mechanically support and electronically connect electronic components, using conductive pathways (often called traces) tracks or signal traces etched, from copper sheets laminated on to a non-conductive substrate. The possess lines and pads that connect various points together. The board types include the following: single-sided PCBs, double-sided, Rig PCBs, flexible PCBs, Rigid-flex, High frequency, aluminum backed PCBs and copper backed PCBs.<sup>11</sup>



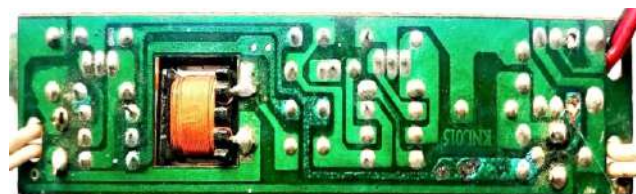
*Electronic Circuit Board*



*Printed Circuit Board*



*Electronic Circuit Board*



*Back of an Electronic Circuit Board*

The image histogram was also employed on some of his works of art, for two major reasons; to draw comparative inferences, as it relates to the intensity (tonal energies and colour kinetics of some of his art works) and the importance of bringing to limelight; the veracity or ultraprecision of Balogun's real essence for his visual simulations, using the circuit boards. This exhibition and the visual prolegomenon, resolves around Adeola Balogun's recent explorations and innovations, which has culminated into amazing and a well consolidated experimentation. The direct observatory and the psychoanalytical method was used in identifying, sorting (coding) and examining the art works; in order to arrive at a convenient visual taxonomy, using the parameter of consistency over time and phase; because a technique in an attainable visual experimentation can only become a style if it withstands the tides of time in consistency.

This exhibition also affords us the salient opportunity, to comprehend the attendant values of experimental art, vis-à-vis as a creative technique with uniqueness in style: Experimental art has less production cost, (though not all times), it is home-friendly, creates identity and status mode or symbol, it initiates a curio sensation (state of rapture) on the beholders of art, and above all; affords the artist a recognition of originality and the mode of self-identity.

### **Labyrinthine Morphology: A Deconstruction, Visual Taxonomy and Reconstruction**

One can only attempt to postulate for convenience, in order to arrive at a classification or visual taxonomy. It is never a rule: However, it is vital for building up scholarly visual art research and knowledge. Because, modern art itself does not breath well under martinet restrictions or confinement. Hence the essence for a little bit of historical documentation, which makes this viable and feasible. Art is ideally to be compared on the premise (basis) of variations in subject matter, style, idiosyncrasies, traits, time and space, materials, eclecticism, hybridization, historicism, artist's intention, signature, dimension, and origin (including culture history). All these tend to assist to ascertain the veracity of every work of art and the artist; in view of the ideal or classical mode for visual taxonomy.

The captivation or conjuration of any work of art most times; is subjective. Hence, the artist's intention, may not always align or be clear to the beholders of such works. This is the main reason for a deconstruction of the real imbedded or inherent meanings; the subjective, or symbolic inferences, along with the actual intents of the creator, which require a careful and adequate decipherment, for a fairly and acceptable perception. Most works of art, no matter how naturalistic they seem to appear; may still have the imbedded or inherent meaning, often allegorical, which only the creator will be able to explain. Scholars, only thrive in using universal aesthetic inferences and modules when deconstructing; in order to reconstruct...because, the visual arts most times, may become borderless. Also, the manner the visual arts affect the audience, is of great importance to the art historian, critics or aestheticians.<sup>14</sup>

However, all creative artists have intents; often referred to as the artist's intension or intent. While the specific value of the artist's intent varies from case to case. Aesthetic intent is a major component or key part of our cumulative experience of art; it correlates with specific neuroanatomical loc. And raises interesting and compelling questions specific to this milieu of automatized or computerized thinking. Synoptically, it is acceptable that; the visual artist intent, drives or powers (enhances) aesthetic transformation.<sup>19</sup>

The visual contact with Balogun art works, also require a psychoanalytical approach. The psychoanalysis or psychoanalytical theory; generally, involves so many segments of thought forms. However, the most apparent is that, change generally involves making the unconscious conscious, as expressed by Freud's oft cited axiom: "Where id (one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory...) has been there, shall ego be". Although Freud's understanding of the nature of the change process evolved over the course of his lifetime, central to his mature thinking was the idea that change, involves first; becoming aware of our instinctual impulses and unconscious wishes, and the learning to deal with them

in a mature, rational, and reflective fashion.<sup>17</sup> When the psychoanalytical is transposed into the visual arts, a new and extended premise is at our disposal: Hence, the psychoanalysis in the performance or visual arts deals primarily with the significance of art works (including drama, literature, dance, poetry, etc.), the art itself, aesthetic response of the viewer, and the cultural context), the power of images and their symbolic meanings (conceptual) meanings, with the process and products of creativity and with history.<sup>14</sup> This approach was found useful, when analyzing Balogun's works of art. However, visual analysts often look out for what best typifies any classification: consistency in stylistic tendencies, remain the bedrock for this premise. In the case of Balogun's recent Labyrinthine Morphology; the Printed Circuit Boards (PCB) and Electronic Circuit Boards (ECB) permeate all his works. This he has utilized in a dual mode: the aesthetical and allegorical.

Some of his works of art were also investigated via the Histogram, because of the various materials employed in his visual experimentations in this exhibition. The histogram is a representation a frequency distribution by means of rectangles, whose widths represent classintervals and whose areas are proportional to the corresponding frequencies.<sup>20</sup> The major aim of a histogram is to graphically (in this case in colour modulations) summarize the distribution of a univariate data set (as in a specific work of art). However, the Image Histogram is directly more relevant to the visual artist. The image histogram acts as a graphical representation of the total distribution in a digital image. It plots the number of pixels for each tonal value. This is often achieved by effectively spreading out the most frequent intensity values as illustrated

Plate: 2, "Rare Species" below. The stretching out of the intensity of the image; hence all image histograms are based on the frequency of luminance in the image.





Plate:2 <sup>a/b</sup> Rare Species. Adeola Balogun. Steel/Electronic Board/Stainless Steel. 2020. Resolution: 660 x 897.

### Attendant Values of the Circuit Boards in Labyrinthine Morphology:

Many may be wondering why this artist, has decided to explore, innovate and experiment using these circuit boards in his recent visual deliberations. A peep into his words will give an initial answer.

Balogun in his words, affirmed that: "His technique of exploring each material is usually informed by its nature and morphology; could be additive, subtractive or combined. I also follow trajectories that my explorations open for me. I follow the concern about what is next in manipulating and exploring what I am working with. Each work is usually a gateway into a new narrative. In reference to content, a wide spectrum of influence matters contributes to my self-imposed explorative tasks which include people, places, books, music, myth, folklore, and encountered material itself.<sup>16</sup>

A careful appraisal of these works reveal the following attendant values: The most conspicuous from my view; is that, this artist uses these circuit boards to replace large spaces often leavened with indigenous African motifs in his compositions, thereby in a spontaneous and synoptic visual effect; this reduces time and space, stress and strain; on one hand, but also, creates a kinetic impression of a multiplication in a static phases of mixed formal fragments; of vision as motifs, signs, shapes and patterns. This, to me is a high level of a deep ethnic sense; adequately utilized...visual wisdom. According to the visual artist; "his subject matter in his work is typically steeped in interrogating existential questions and challenges, that make up our social navigation. This is usually

spurred by his personal experiences and memories; which culminated in the concept of the present thematic parameter".<sup>12</sup>

Four identifiable categories or series, (as he calls them) are presented as his art corpus in this researched exhibition. They are: Goldmines and Landmines series, Electrifying series, Soundaspiration series and Organo-electrifying series. The conspicuous visual index in all these series' is the profusion in the use of the Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs), which permeates all his art works.

In "Where is the Emir" Plate 11., the horse is heavily embellished or adorned with these electronic circuit boards, to represent visually the paraphernalia found on all royal horses during the Durbar festivals, special occasions or as the normal dressing for these royal horses, found in most African cultures. The naturalism of the horse, attained with the metal by the artist, testifies to his ability, to replicate such for these paraphernalia; however, this may disannul the basics in aesthetics and his creative propensity, hence the use of these circuits boards to simulate the same visual effect. Plate 12 verifies this notion or argument.



Plate: 11. Where is the Emir. Adeola Balogun. Steel. Electronic Board. 102" x 85" x 27". 2020

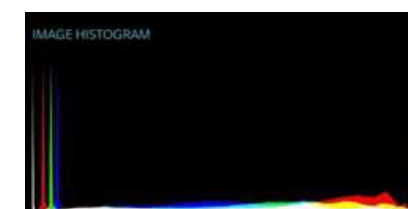


Plate: 11. Histogram. Resolution: 1080 x 2340



Plate: 12...cited<sup>27</sup>

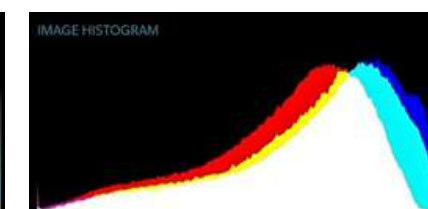


Plate: 12. Histogram. Resolution: 1080 x 656

The anatomy of the horse, remains one of the most difficult organic figure to depict by many artists. "He, who is able to depict or portray, saliently the stallion in its exactitude-nature without correction, remains a master artist and a lord of draughtmanship".<sup>31</sup> Here, Isiaka Osunde, Abayomi Barber, Adeola Balogun, Edosa Oguigo, Abiodun Olaku, Odun Orimolade, Tolu Filani, Ibe Ananaba, Dotun Popoola remain in the visual art Catbird Seat in the drawing phenomenal field, and a few others. Balogun has executed many art works, depicting the stallion; these materials include the extensive use of the pneumatic tires (rubber), all metal types, charcoal, conte, and several other unconventional materials. The circularly shaped, rare fish and the fluid-like iron rods; induce a simulated sensation of the aquatic dynamism, motion or kinetics. The symbolic inference of the circle; as in African cosmology, represents the concept of continuity and regeneration. The profusion of the circuit boards, along with its components represent the scales of the fish. The effective visual impact and advantage is enormous. It saves the visual artist a lot of time and space, using the circuit components, as a composite unit, from a relative distance, reveal myriads of simulated patterns, motifs, signs and symbols, all in consonance. Plate 14 reveals a well closed-up view of the "Rare Specie" in Plate: 13. We do not expect this visual artist to replicate all the various scale types in the world; hence his intrinsic usage of the circuit boards to actualize a dynamic visual surge on the beholders of his art works. Why...because there are four basic scale types known globally, carefully arranged and aligned together, these are: The Placoid, Ganoid, Cycloid and Ctenoid.<sup>28</sup>

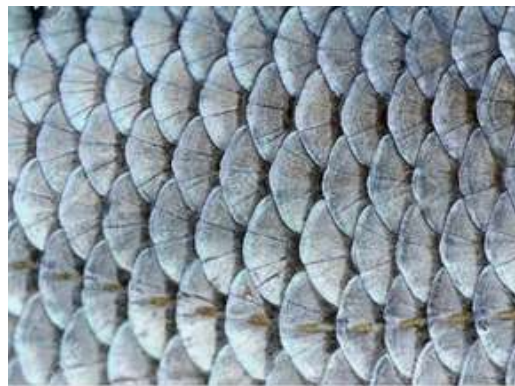


Plate: 16. A Typical Numerous Dermal Scales formation<sup>28</sup>



Plate: 17. Close-view of Balogun's Scale modulation and simulation in Rare Specie"

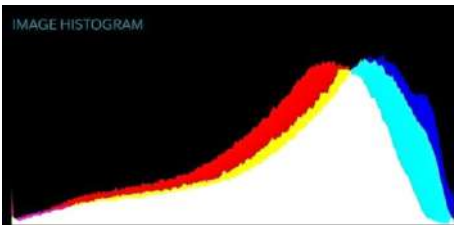


Plate: 16. Histogram. Resolution: 1080 x 656

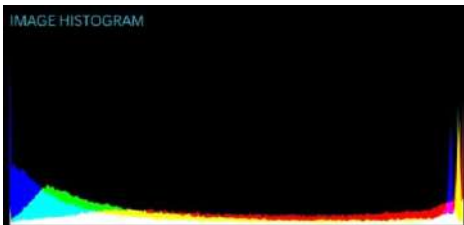


Plate: 17. Histogram. Resolution: 660 x 897

Since the image histogram usually reveals the number of pixels' brightness (intensity) in an image; it virtually, means it is a graphical representation of such number of pixels (tones) as a function of their respective or relative intensity. Histograms comprise of bins,<sup>29</sup> and each bin representing a certain intensity value range.<sup>30</sup> By implication, the scale along the bottom of any typical image histogram goes from left to right, from 0% brightness (black) to 100% brightness (white). The taller the peak, the more pixels of that brightness there are in the image. Another important factor that is very important in using image histogram, is the bin. In constructing any histogram, the first step is to "bin" (or "bucket") the range of values-that is, divide the entire range of values into a series of intervals-and then count how many values fall into each interval. ...The bins are usually specified as consecutive, non-overlapping intervals of a variable. This discuss is beyond the scope of this deconstruction and reconstruction; however, it is vital, in view of highlighting the essence and fortification of his presentation. From the two histograms above; Plates: 16 and 17 respectively; we see a serious variation in intensity and tonal variations. When you have so much white columns in any image histogram as revealed in Plate: 16, it shows that despite the fact that, it is a natural entity; the simulated image in Plate has more colour modulations. This affirms the authenticity in Balogun's creative propensity in using the printed and electronic boards in realizing his visual simulation, which activates more creativity and the curio sensation to the beholders (viewers) of art.



## Conclusion-His Plebiscite.

The modern Nigerian visual artist, vis-à-vis, his counterparts in other parts of the world; has enormous sources of inspirations, materials, styles and techniques to deliberate from. However, a paucity of understanding of these factors can be a latent handicap for him. Form and Material experimentation, within the ambits of technology; deserves proper understanding, because of the complexity, diversity or range in which they are made of. Modern Art itself allows for diverse experimentation and die-hard innovations, in order for the concept of selfidentity or individuality to thrive; however, the modern visual artist must be armed with the advances, knowledge and advantages of technology in order to achieve his corps d'elite result(s). Technology is meant to serve mankind, and here the artist has his or her enormous advantages.

Adeola Balogun's art works exude energy-what I refer to as captive energy, and in most cases, highly votive and always inherent with this curio sensation. Once the principle of energy is admitted into art; everything changes. Metal to him is a living entity; beyond a mere material. He makes metal flexible, friendly and sacred; this allows for tension, counter-tension and compression, with his human compassion. These attributes afford him, in utilizing metal to achieve a spiritual synthesis, decorative stylizations, via simulations and optical illusions, symbolic inferences in creating a new spatial relationship in modern Nigerian art milieu.

This artist re-defines metal to be a friend of man; his home and his immediate domiciliation or ecology. The virtues mention above, have often aided him in making his art works align successfully with nature. He has carved a niche for himself in bringing metal-in its various alloys (in shapes and forms), diverse found materials closer to man...in fact to be man's companion; as asserted in the words of Brandon Sanderson: "I write these words in steel, for anything else not set in

metal cannot be trusted". Balogun transforms metal in its various shapes, forms in a visual modulation that makes it a man's companion. This he achieves using aperiodic, habitual manner of configurations of intricate shapes and forms, spatial manipulations and with thematic poesy. He utilizes art forms in stressing the diversity of the Nigerian socio-cultural values, vis-à-vis Africa and his latent intuition (allegorical) inferences of man, and his environment.

Balogun has developed and expanded a high-level visual expression, with inexorable logic, which are ever metamorphosing. The images in his mixed media paintings along, with his drawings, are deployed to reference the notion of the profoundness and overwhelming impact of technology and science on, and in his works, and by extension on the activities of the modern man, in his present milieu. In reference to his content modulations; a wide range spectrum of influence matters, contribute, according to him-to his self-imposed explorative task; which include-people, places, books, music, dance, myth, folklore (and I add-customs, traditions and culture) and the encountered material itself. Balogun never forgets to relate the genre of his current milieu in all his visual deliberations. The artist's dexterity and spryness in the manipulation of various metal types and the pneumatic tires in his visual art expressions; has ameliorated various young Nigerian sculptors in the management and modulation of many other materials or found objects in their art works, and to their delight.

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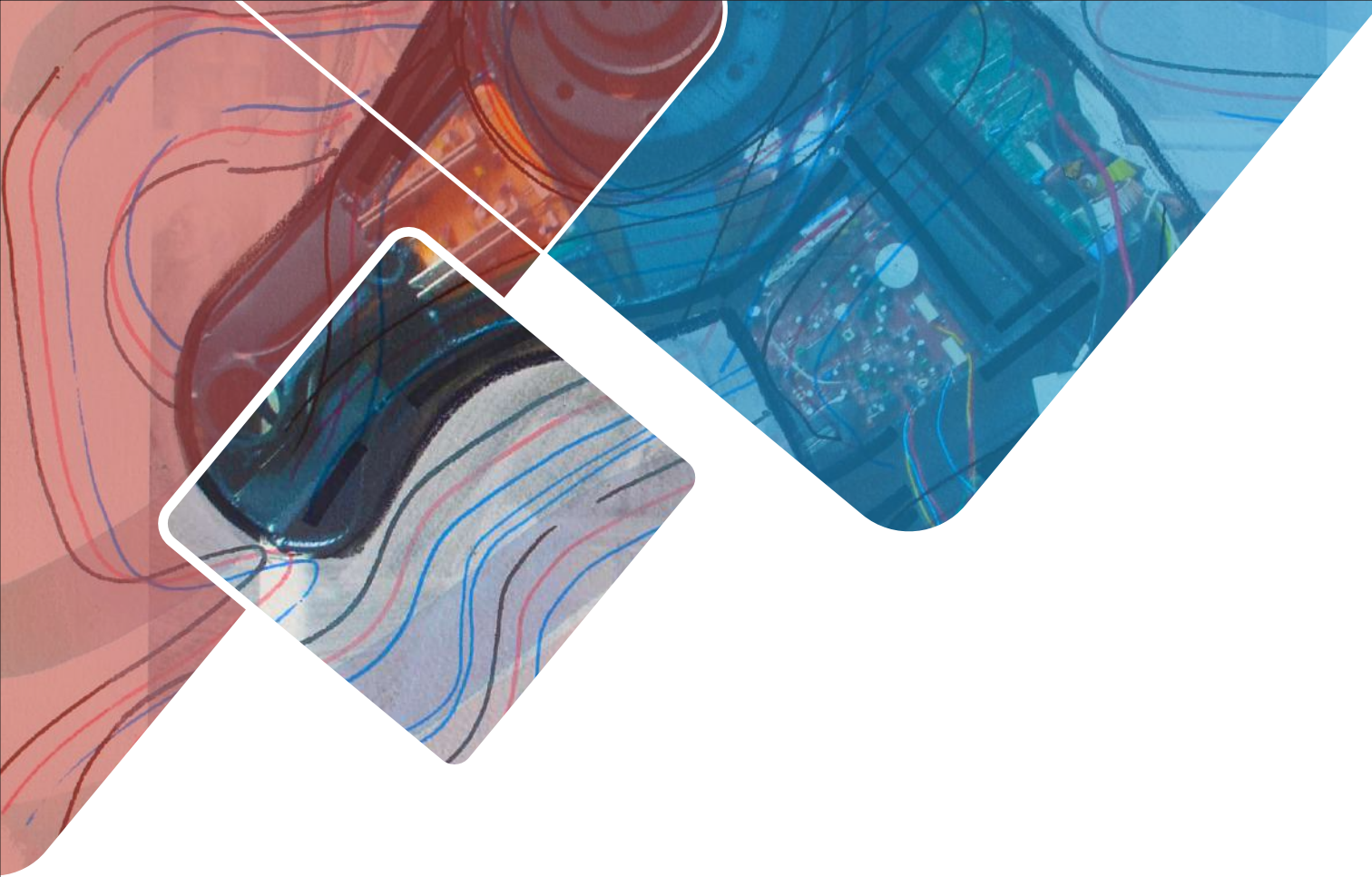
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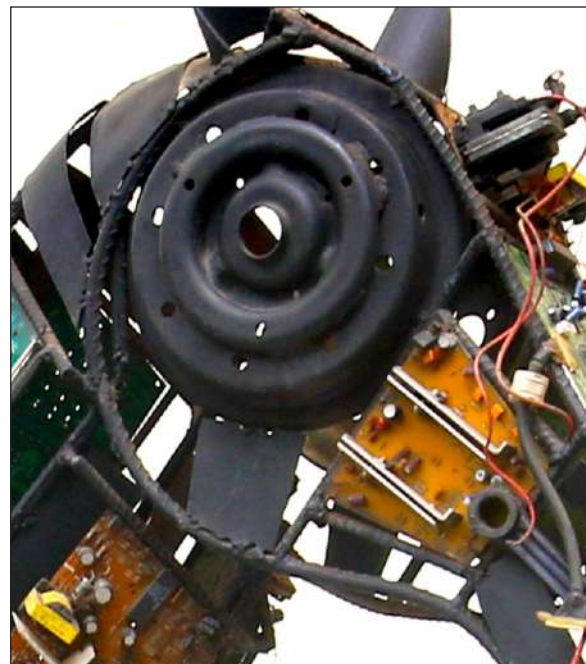
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WORKS ▶



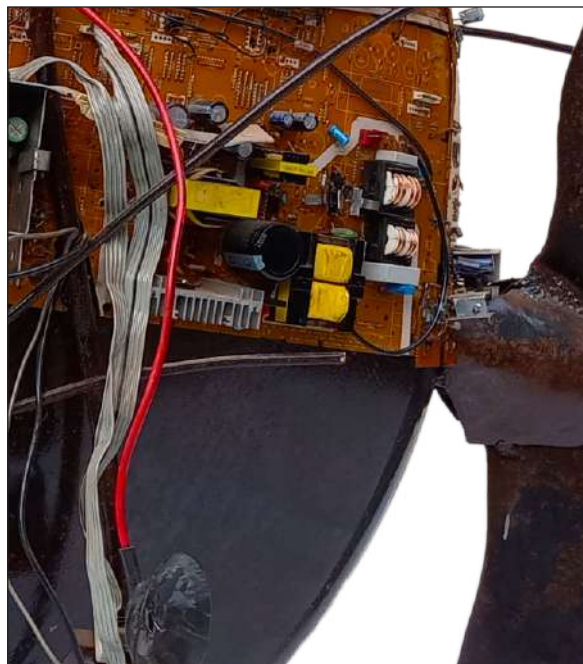
***Where is the Emir?***  
Mild Steel, electronic panel,  
102inc x 87inc x 27inc, 2020



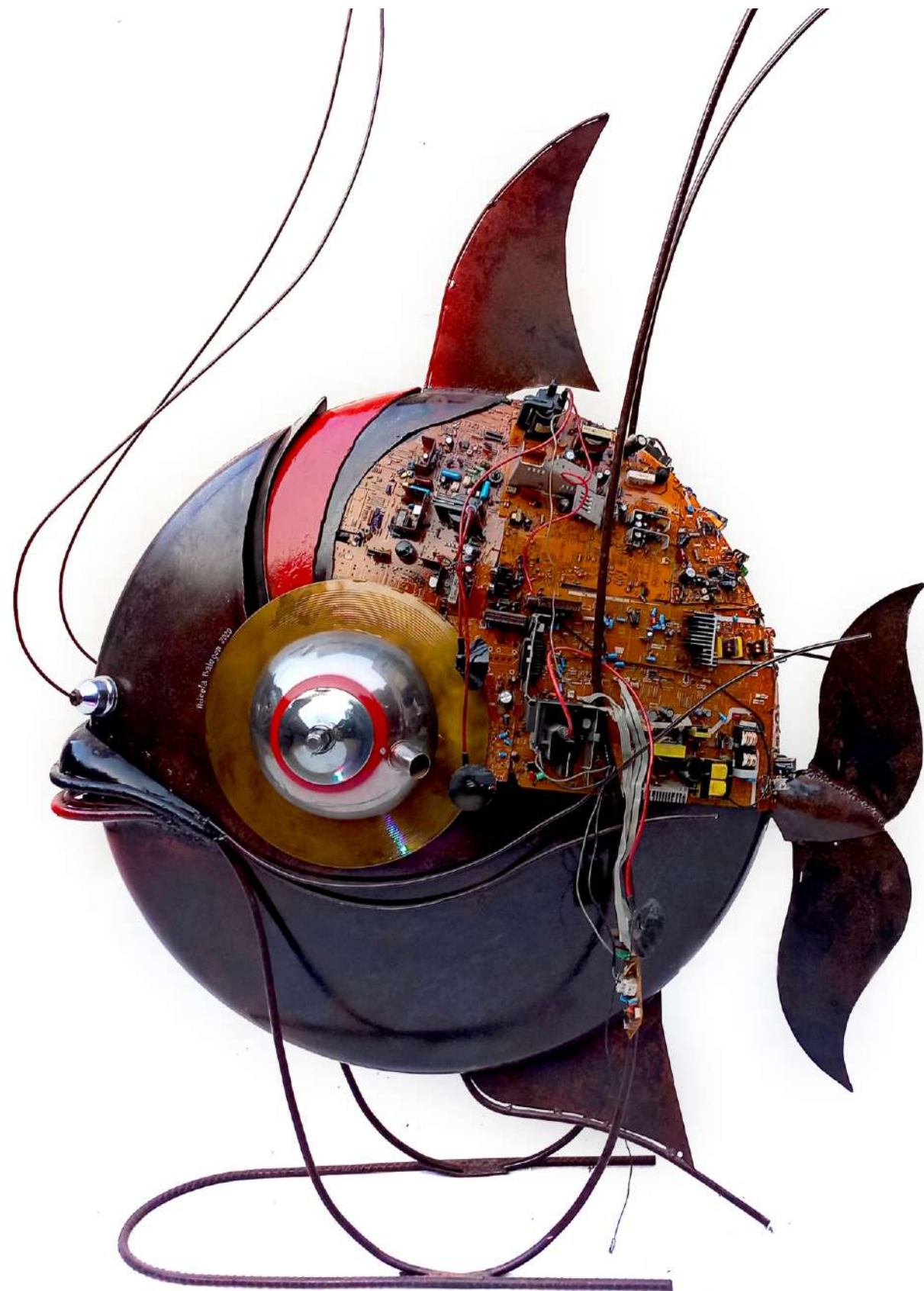


*Rare Specie IV*  
Mild steel, stainless steel, electronic panel,  
2022

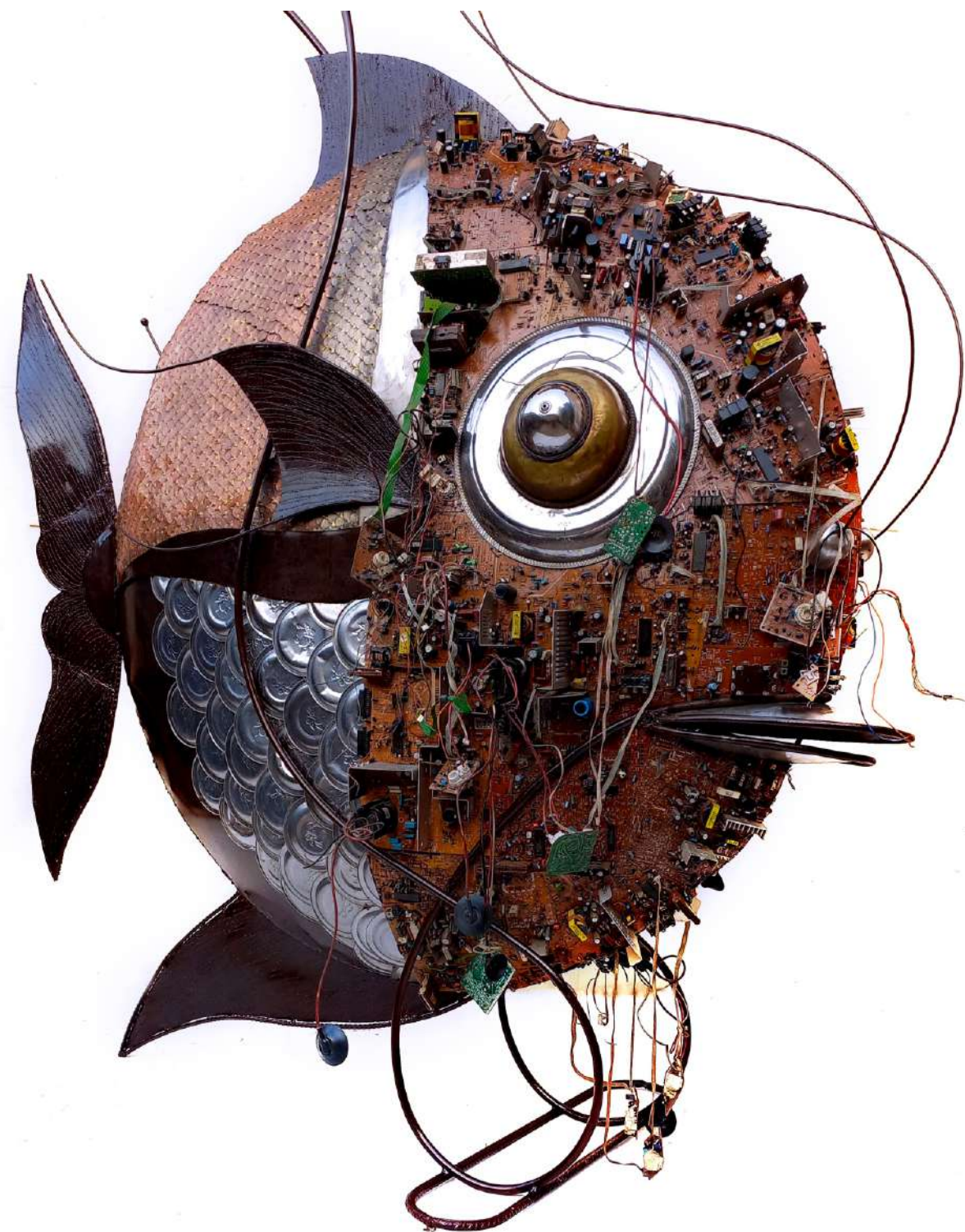




*Rare Specie I*  
Mild steel, stainless steel, electronic panel,  
2020





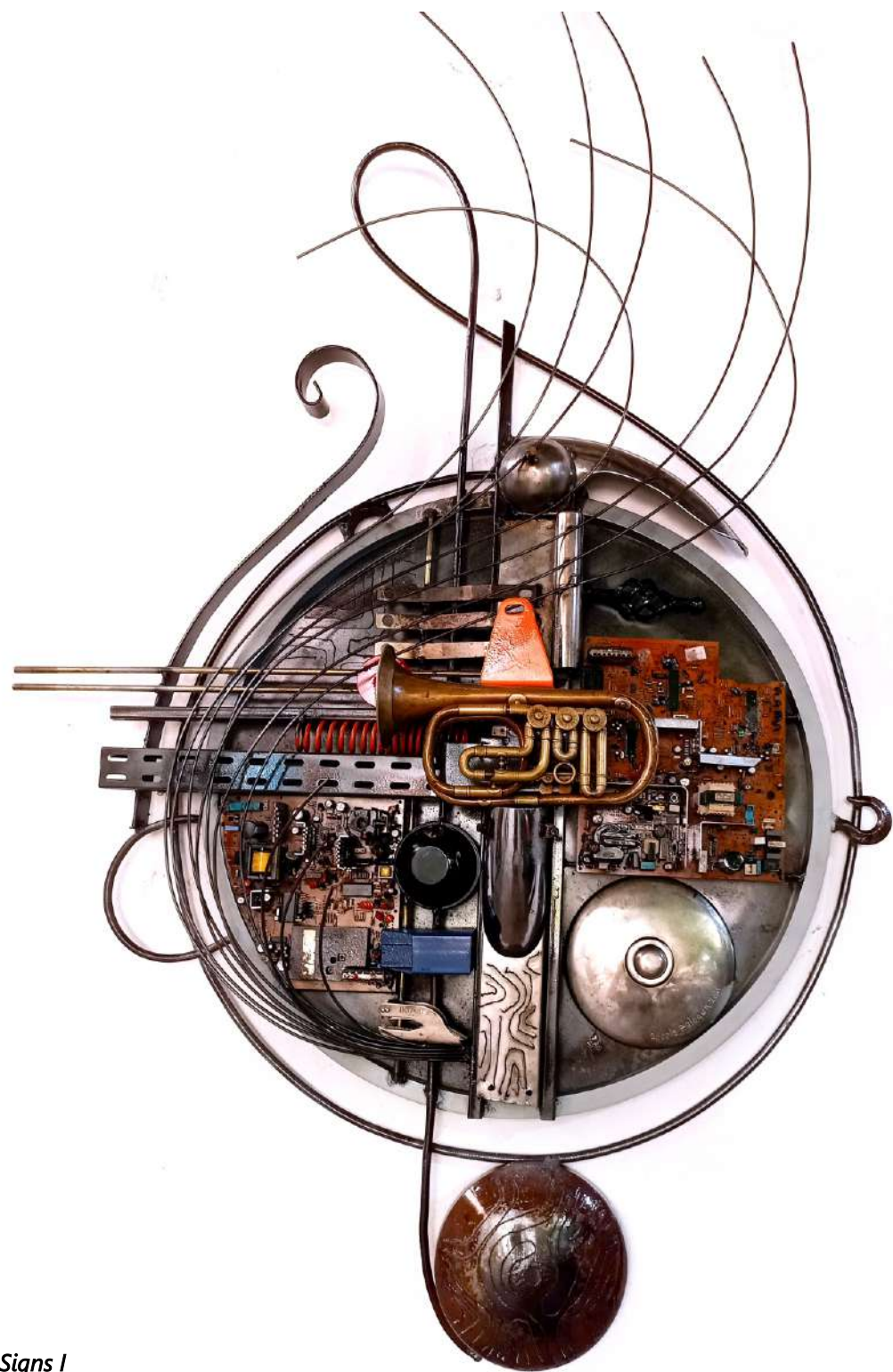


*Rare Specie III*  
Mild steel, stainless steel, electronic panel,  
97inc x 78inc x 22inc, 2020



*Rare Specie II*  
Mild steel, stainless steel, electronic panel,  
2020



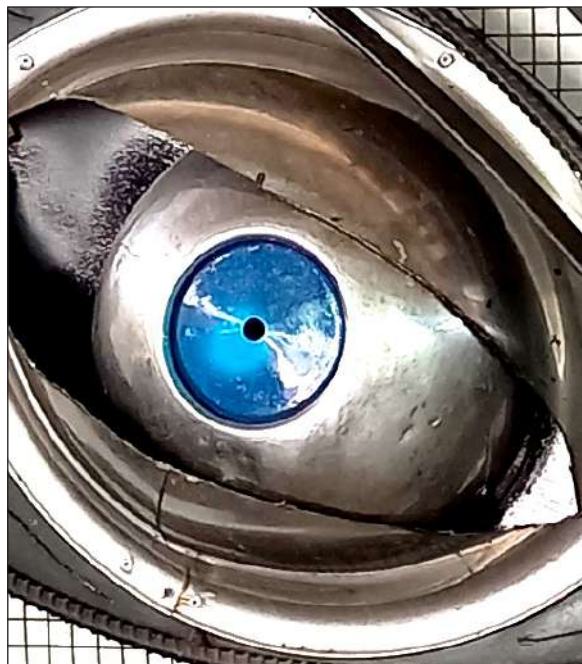


***Sound and Signs I***  
Steel, saxophone, electronic panel,  
71inc x 42inc x 9inc, 2021

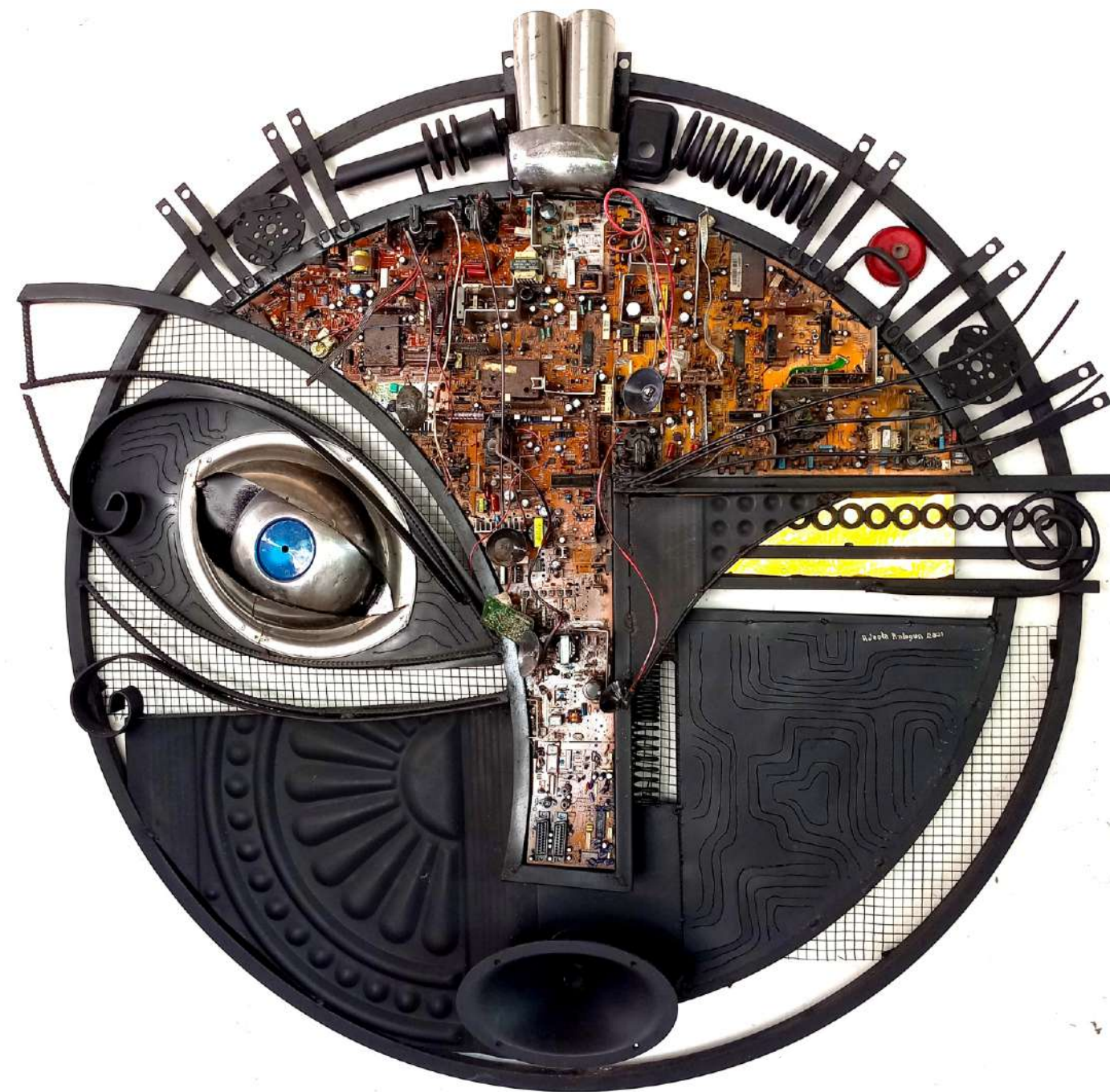


***Sound and Signs II***  
Steel, horn, electronic panel,  
66inc x 45inc x 8inc, 2020

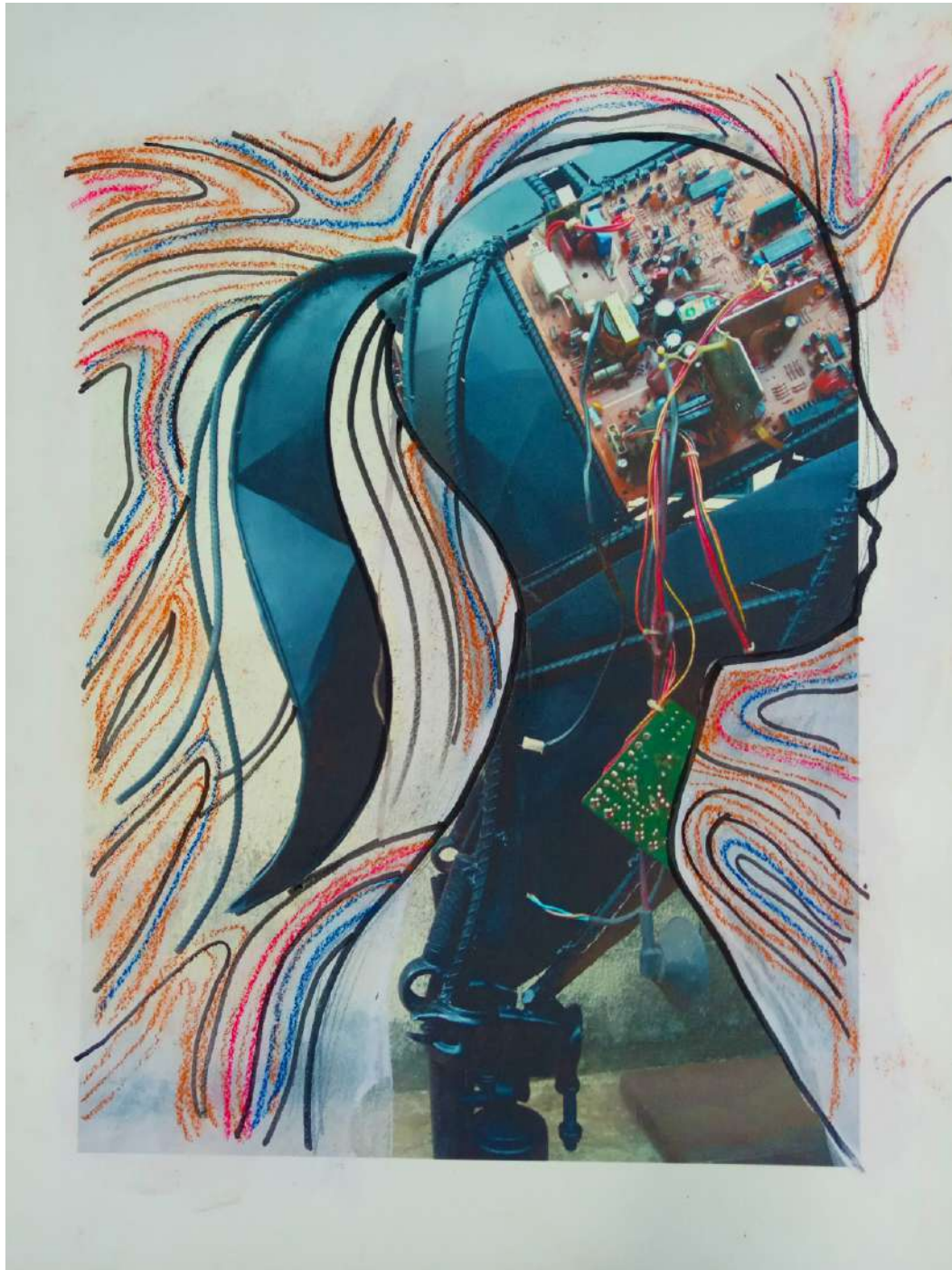




**Blue Eyed**  
Mild steel, stainless steel, electronic panel, 2020







*Pony Tail*  
Mixed media, 18inc x 24inc, 2020.



*The Head that Wears the Crown*  
Mixed media, 27inc x 21inc, 2020





*Encapsulated I*  
Mixed media, 27inc x 21inc, 2020

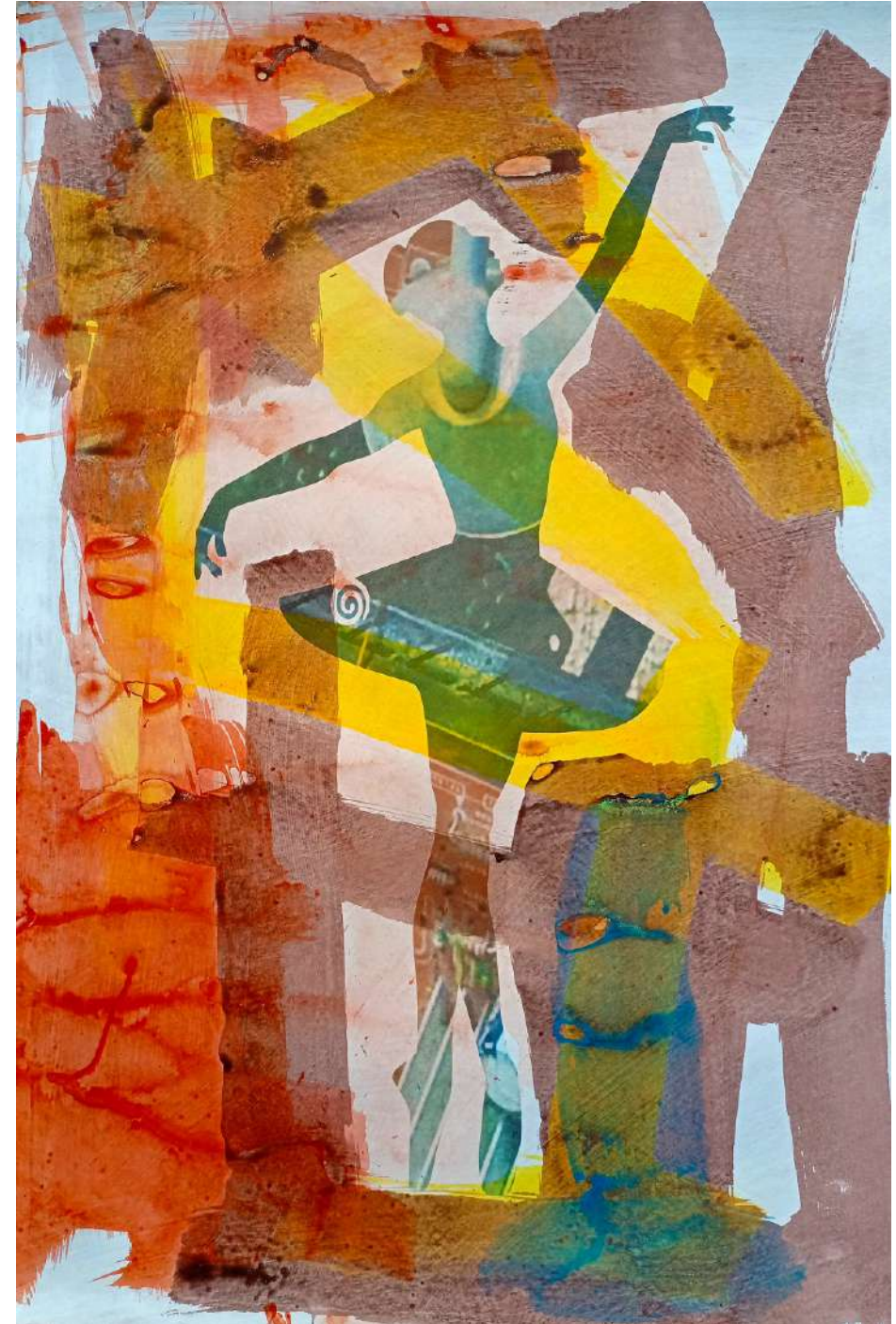


*Encapsulated II*  
Mixed media, 27inc x 21inc, 2020





*A/I*  
Mixed media, 27inc x 21inc, 2020

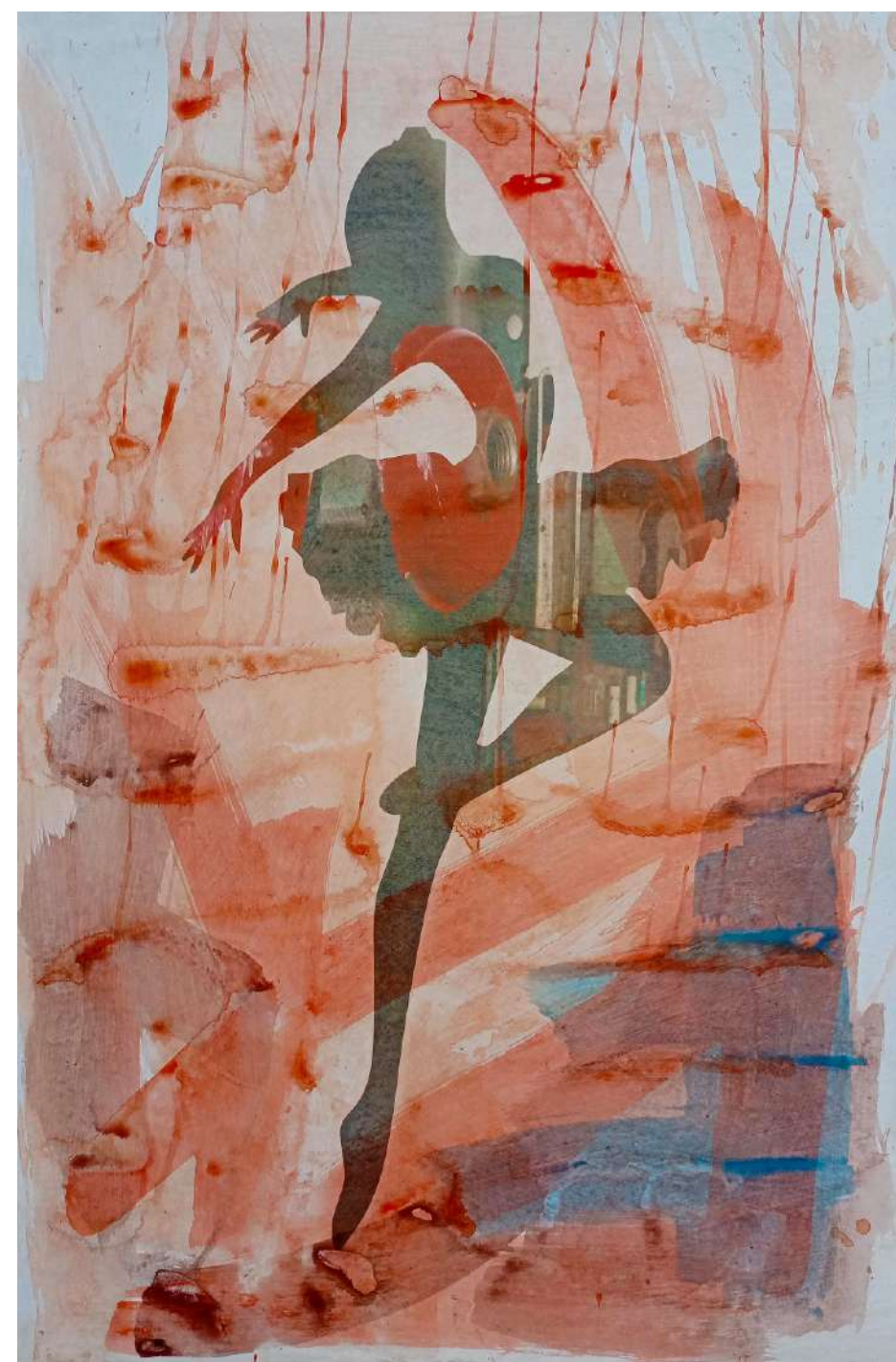


*A Body in Motion I*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021



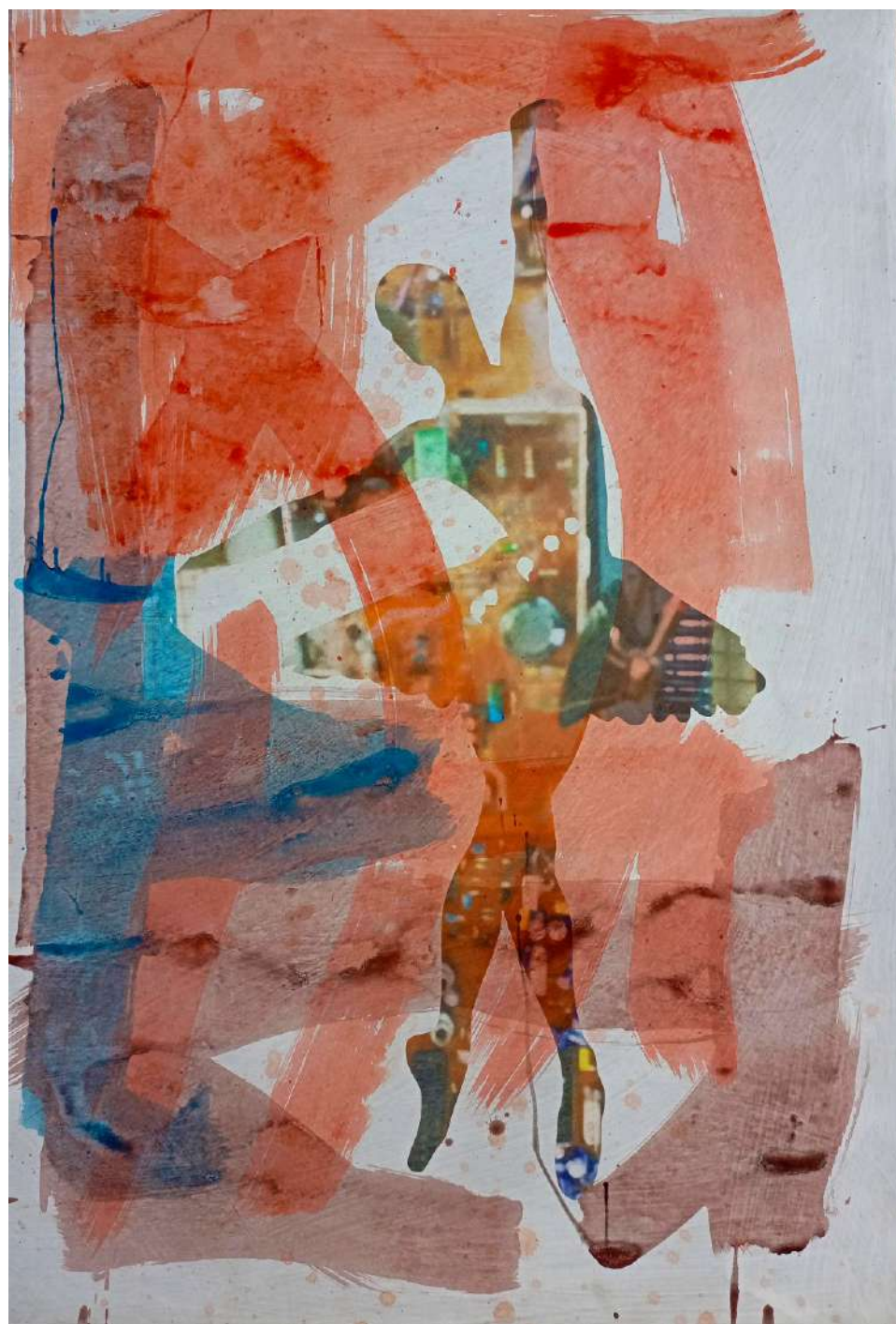


*A Body in Motion II*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021



*A Body in Motion III*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021





*A Body in Motion IV*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021

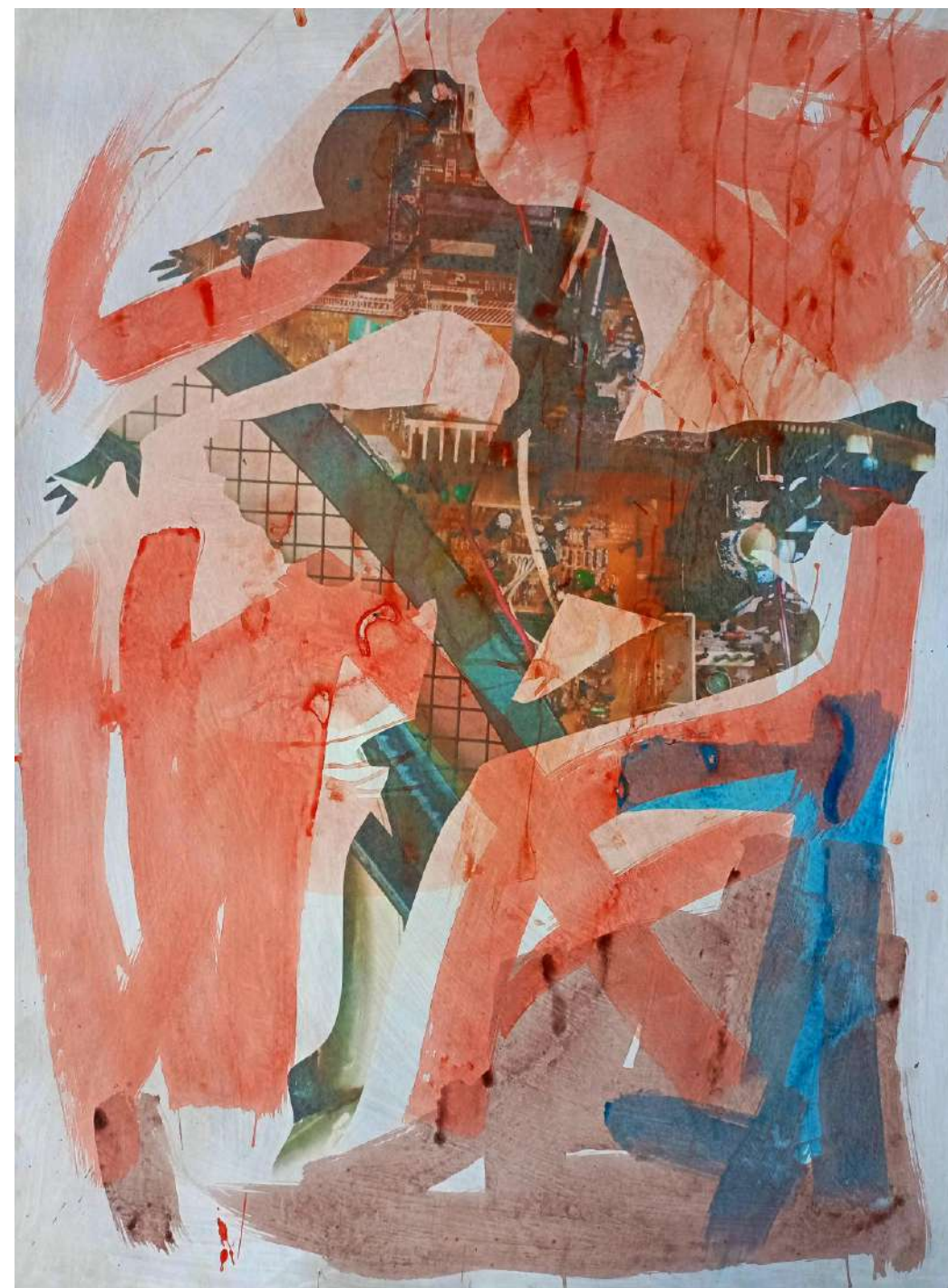


*A Body in Motion V*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021





*A Body in Motion VI*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021

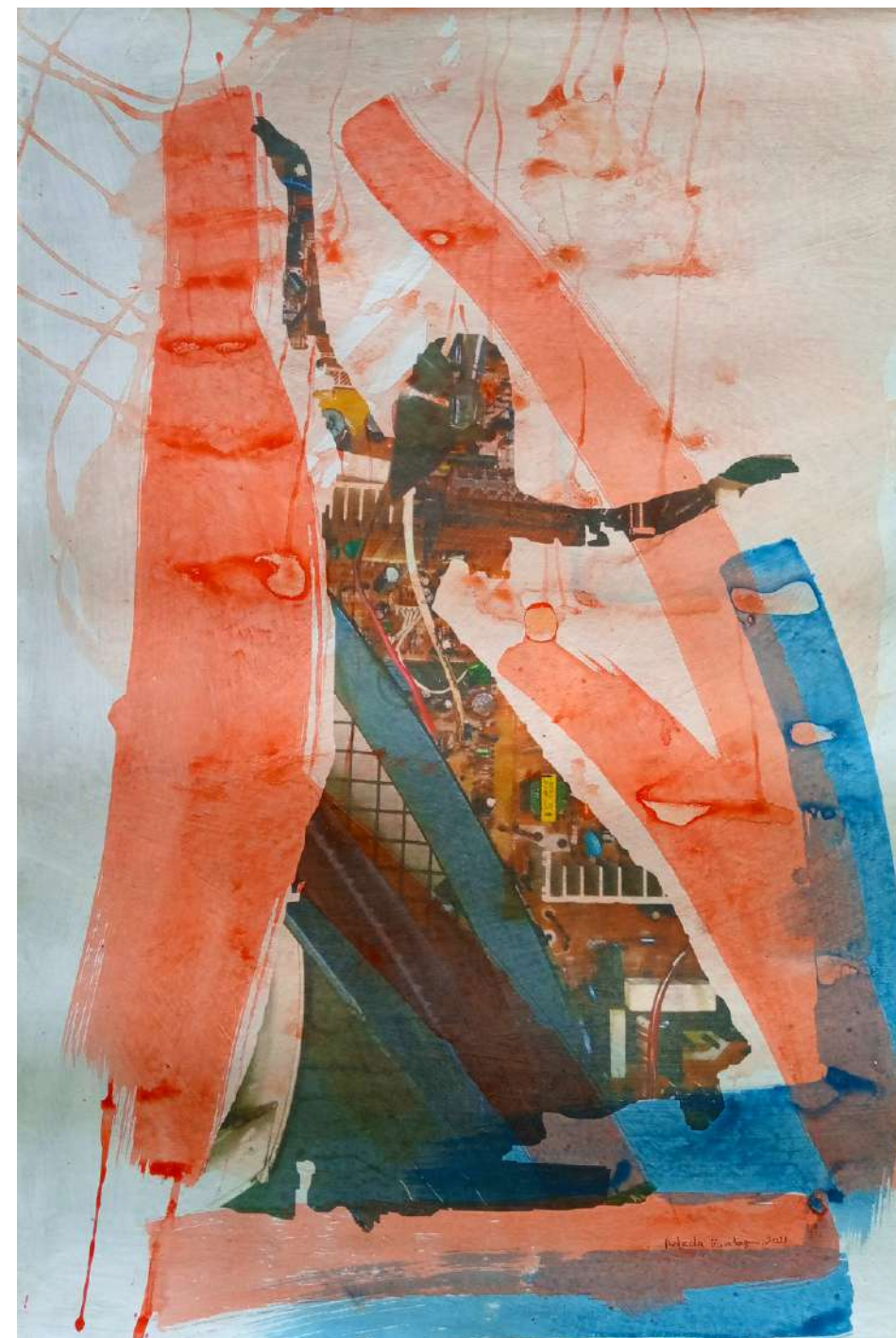


*A Body in Motion VII*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021



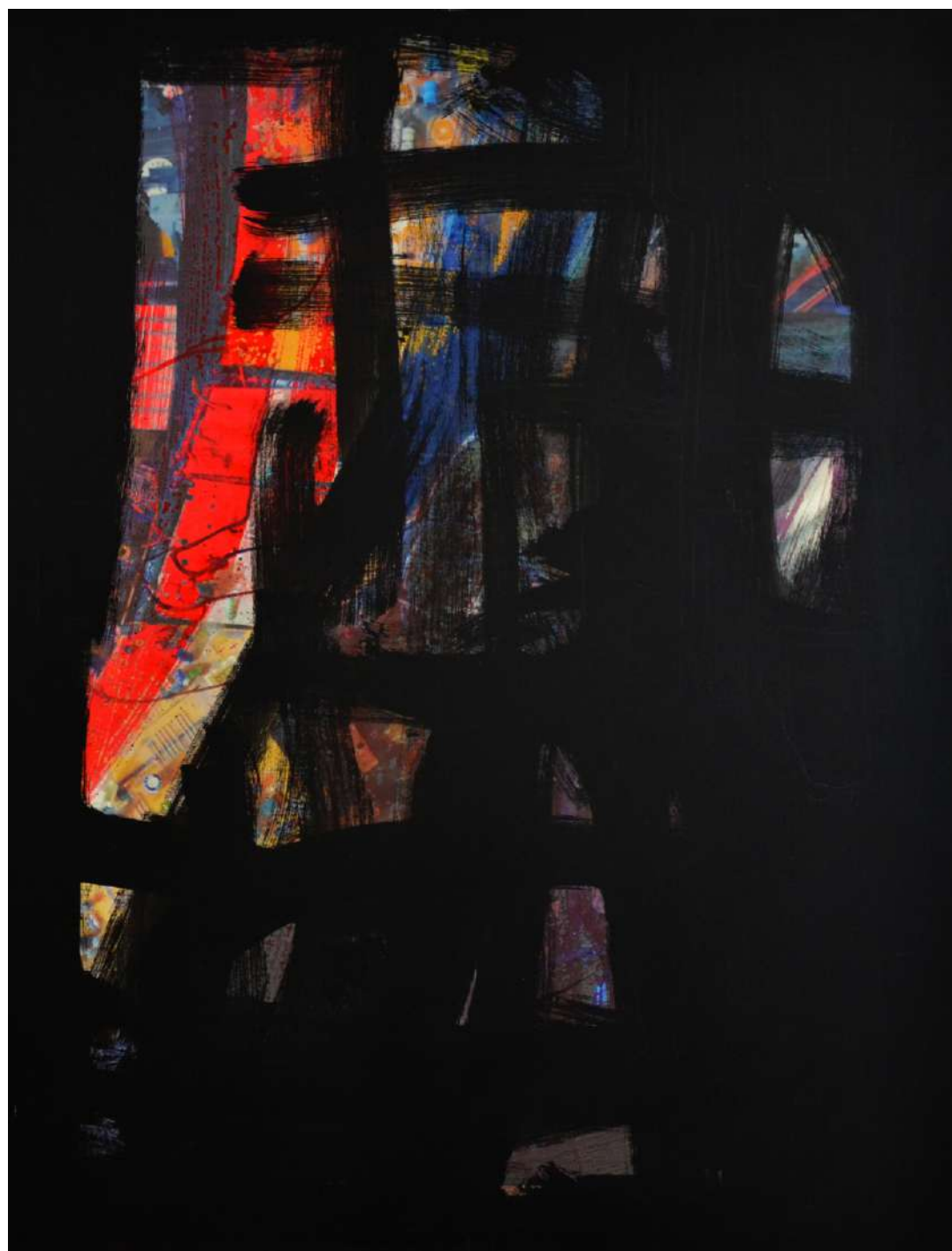


*A Body in Motion VIII*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021

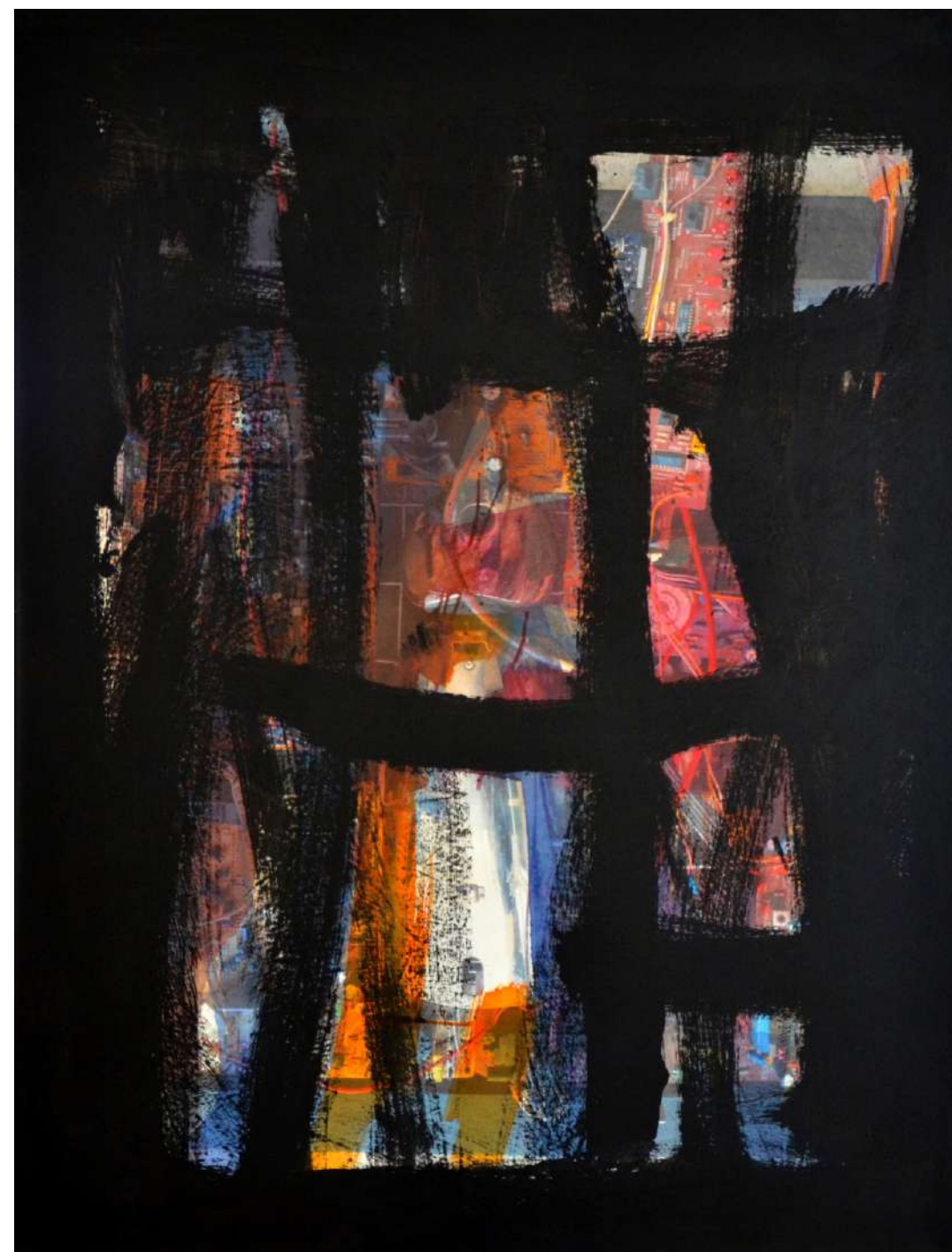


*A Body in Motion IX*, (Simone Biles series),  
36inc x 23inc, 2021





*Goldmines and Landmines I*  
Mixed media, 104cm x 135cm, 2020

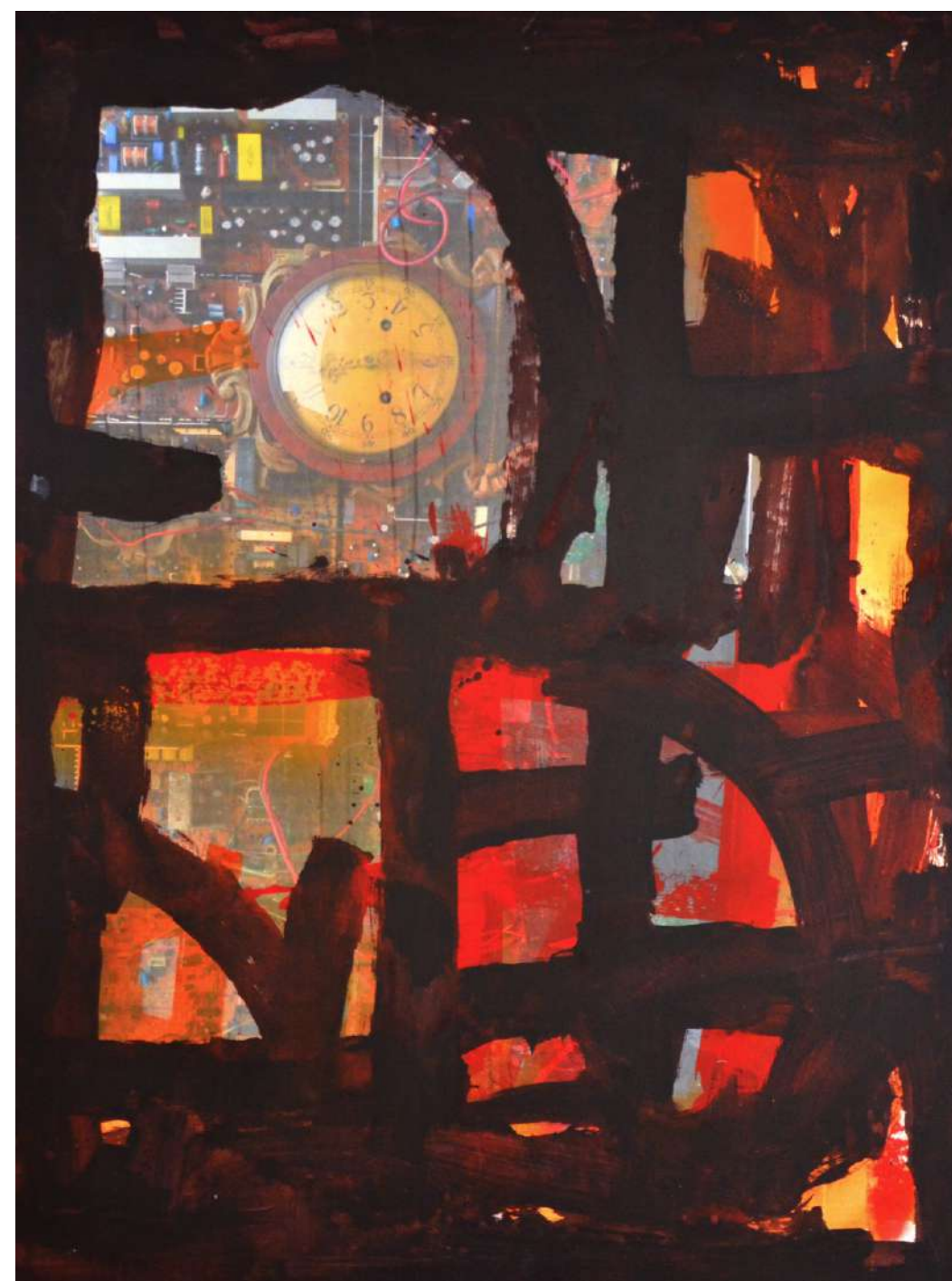


*Goldmines and Landmines II*  
Mixed media, 104cm x 135cm, 2020





*Goldmines and Landmines III*  
Mixed media, 104cm x 135cm, 2020



*Goldmines and Landmines IV*  
Mixed media, 104cm x 135cm, 2020





*Goldmines and Landmines V*  
Mixed media, 104cm x 135cm, 2020



*Sound and Signs III*  
Mixed media, 27inc x 21inc, 2020





**Adeola Musliu Balogun** combines a fully engaged studio practice with an academic career at Nigeria's premier tertiary institution, the Yaba College of Technology. He graduated from Yaba College of Technology, with a specialization in sculpture (1993/94) and Masters of Art (MFA, Sculpture) at the University of Benin (2001/4), Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. He also acquired a Ph.D. (studio) in Sculpture (2019) from Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State.

Adeola Balogun has staged twelve solo exhibitions which include: Current Rhythm, CAMAA (2019), Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, *Tribute to Fela* (2019), Galleri Astley, Uttersberg, Sweden, *Bubbles of Emotion* (2017), Omenka Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, *Connections I & II* (2015), Galleri Astley and Galleri Pumphause, Uttesberg and Trollhattan, respectively, Sweden, *Mirage I* (2014), ArtHub, Abudhabi, *Mirage II* (2014), Quintessence Gallery, Lekki, Lagos, *Matter Redirected I & II*, Galleri Astley, Uttesberg and Galleri Pumphause, Trollhattan, Sweden (2013), *Soundspiration*, Omenka Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, *Ants and Giants* (2011), Quintessence Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, *Infinite Patterns* (2009)), Nike Art Gallery, Lekki, Lagos, *The Seed Phenomenon* (2006) amongst others. He has also participated in several group shows such as *Ajorin Dance Metaphor* (2020), *October Rain*, and others. He has executed several commissioned projects within Nigeria and beyond is to his credit. He was an artist-in-residence in 2013 and 2015 in Ashley Gallery, Uttesberg, Sweden, artist-in-residency, ArtHub (2014), Abu Dhabi, UAE amongst others.

Some of his selected public commissioned works include the late Michael Ibru statue (bronze, 2017), at Michael & Cecilia Bru University, Delta State, The late Ayangburen of Ikorodu statue (2015), Ikorodu, Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo (19ft) statue, at Allen round-about, Ikeja, Funso Williams bronze statue (18ft), at Western Avenue round-about, now named after Funso Williams, and Sir John Glover and Madam Tinubu's bronze busts, at the foyer of Union Bank building in Marina, Lagos, Nigeria. Also are the Towards Achieving Distinction, (welded metal sculpture, 25ft) and Symbol of Justice and Culture statue (bronze sculpture, 26ft), commissioned by Omooba (Engr.) Yemisi Shyllon, for the University of Ibadan

campus, Oyo State (2009) and University of Lagos (2015), Nigeria respectively. His works History (2015), welded steel sculpture (11ft), and Outflow, and installation, are both at Galleri Ashley collection, Utesberg, Sweden.

Balogun has participated in several exhibitions, seminars, and conferences both within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. He also has contributed to journal publications. He has facilitated and participated in several creative workshops such as Quintessence Nigeria Limited/Galleri Astley Residency (2013, 2015, 2019), Sweden and First Upcycling (2014), Art Hub, Abu Dhabi, UAE, US and UK, 1996 and 2012 respectively, Harmattan Workshop, Nigeria, and others.

A large body of Balogun's life-size bronze sculpture and tyre works can be found in the OYASAF collection, a private art foundation, established by Omooba(Engr) Yemisi Shyllon. Other notable art collectors and institutions in possession of his works in Nigeria and the diaspora are Galleri Astley, Galleri Trollhattan, and Kulturhuset Koren in Sweden, ArtHub, Abu Dhabi, UAE, Ford Foundation, Pan African University, Nigerian Breweries, American International School amongst several others.

He has won several awards which include: the Plaque of Appreciation and Award of Recognition, 2018 and 2019 respectively by Cornelius Adepegba Museum of African Studies, the University of Ibadan, Distinguished Master Artist (2015) by the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), faculty award as Visual Experimentalist of the Decade (2011), faculty awards as Best Student in life-drawing and sculpture in 1993/94 set, amongst others.

#### **Adeola M. Balogun (Ph.D.)**

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I thank God, the Most Beneficent and the Most Merciful for the realization of this project, despite myriads of challenges and delays.

I am profoundly grateful to Rahman Akar and his staff at The Signature Gallery for their curatorial diligence and professionalism. In the preparatory efforts geared towards hosting this exhibition, the team braced the unpredictable Lagos traffic to visit my studio; a remarkable and commendable feat.

Literary engagement is intellectually demanding, thus; it is pertinent to appreciate the following scholars for creating time out of their tight schedules to contribute to the catalog, which includes Dapo Adeniyi, Prof. Edewor Nelson, Prof. Rukeme Noserime, and Rasheed Amodu.

I appreciate the management of Yaba College of Technology, ably led by Engr. Obafemi Omokugbe and all my colleagues in the School of Art, Design, and Printing Technology for their support and shared camaraderie.

I also want to acknowledge and appreciate Fatai Abdulkareem, Samson Ogundeji, and other members of Artivity Studio for their assistance at different stages of this project; you guys are simply awesome!

The contributions of Yusuf Durodola to the realization of this exhibition are numerous, but your creativity and attention to detail are worth noting. You are truly a great guy to work with.

This is to give unreserved honour to whom it is due in the person of Omooba Yemisi Shyllon for his immeasurable support in different realms; you are highly appreciated. I also extend my gratitude to Larry Ettah, Tokunbo Modupe, and other patrons through the years.

The courage to continuously strive to be better could be very daunting at times; it is on this premise that I have to appreciate my entire family for giving me the reason to march on.





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