

# National Gallery of Art's Balancing Act

By  
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*Diverse but United (Mixed Media) by Izuu Muoneme*

He studied painting but in the last two years, his interest has been in discarded objects. "Two years ago I decided to explore found objects with particular interest in cans and bottle tops," the soft spoken Izuu Muoneme explains at the exhibition hall of the National Gallery of Art (NGA), Enugu this Friday afternoon. The work before you titled, "Diverse but United" (Mixed Media), is an array of covers and cans of different kinds of drink-beverages, soft drinks and alcoholic drinks intricately arranged in an exciting manner. "I used the words, diverse but united because they are from different brands but serve one purpose-drink. Beyond this, the work also relates to people who come from different backgrounds but find themselves congregating for a common purpose either as a community, a nation or the world at large. But the painter confesses that patronage for his new found genre has not been as expected. "I am not discouraged", he says. "In future I want to do a solo exhibition on similar objects."

On the other side of the spectrum is Ejiofor Francis, who's "Egwu Ozo" (Metal) was tagged minutes into the opening of the exhibition. "It's encouraging," he says. I am spurred to do more." The pictorial composition is a recasting of the Ozo title, reserved for the wealthy in his native Onitsha, Anambra State. Using cord, iron, welding machine with bolt junk, the painter in this well executed sculptural piece celebrates the induction of a new Ozo titled man.

For Chukwuemeka Okenwa, the inspiration for his work, "Afia Mgbede" (Night Market-Photography) is to capture for posterity the goings-on in an evening market he used to patronize in the Gwarimpa area of Abuja. "They are squatters," he says. "They took the opportunity to sell at night. They started small but have grown quite big." The work is a

kaleidoscope of traders' selling various wares in the shadow of the night with little illumination...

All the artists who participated in the Enugu exhibition, tagged, "Together Again" showed good grasp of their various media. It is a tribute to the vision of the Director General of NGA, Abdullahi Muku who initiated the Art Fare last year to provide them a window to practice and display their works beyond their normal schedules.

Obviously elated by the quality of the 42 works on display by the 32 in-house artists mainly from the South-East zone, Muku who sees the initiative as a balancing act, stated: "As reflected in the creative evidence before our very eyes, these artists who have never faltered in their daily administrative duties have also not forgotten all it takes to keep the sustenance of their professional discipline in motion and tempo. Indeed, as bona fide members of the creative industry, they are keeping abreast of new happenings in the art world." His challenge to them is to "keep their brushes active for painting and their chisels sharpened in creating images of three dimensionality."

The Art Fare by NGA began last year in Kaduna. The second edition also took place in Kaduna in this year. The Enugu edition which held between Friday, December 12 to Tuesday, December 17 was the third in the series.



***Afia Mgbede (Night market-Photography) by Chukwuemeka Okenwa***