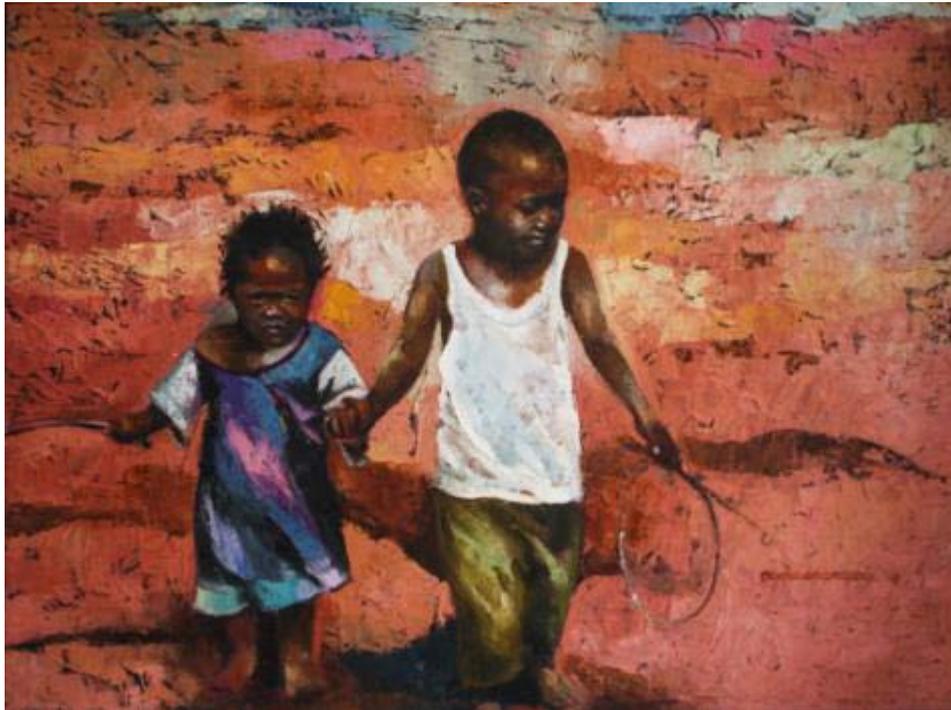


The Pictorial and Natural at Enugu Art Fair

By Uche Nnadozie



Ka Anyi na- let us go- (Oil on Canvas) by Obiora Anamaleze

The Enugu Art Fair, the first in the South East zone but third in the series, is a sequel to the Kaduna show initiated by the National Gallery of Art (NGA) to showcase the works of its in-house professional artists in 2013. The first and second editions took place in Kaduna in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The Enugu exhibition opened at the NGA Temple Street office, GRA on Friday, December 12-Tuesday, December 16, 2014. It featured a collection of artistic products which include paintings, prints, photographs, mix media, sculpture, textile and a display of visual products of high formalism, produced by art professionals with an appealing *beauty of art neophytes*. The subjects, contents and visual language of the exhibits are perceptual, vigorously abstract, quite figurative and strongly naturalistic.

The paintings are natural, pictorial and vividly representational. Adeyemi Omolaja's "Its time for break" and Obiora Anamaleze's "Ka Anyi na" quickly appeal to one. Omolaja's work depicts a group of chicken feeding on a bowl of cereal at dawn reminding one of not only the painstaking rendition of realism but the impressionist and photo-finish tendencies that accompanied the work just as Anamaleze's "Ki Anyi na" created in radiant perches of red, orange with white color as highlights. The vivid understanding of children's anatomy is not in question because the work pictorially reveals a boy taking his younger sister by the hand and leading her home.

The photographs of the Photo-Artist – Chukwuemeka Okenwa provide the viewers with conceptual relevance and aesthetic comfort. Of particular importance is his work – "Igwebuiké" which is a photograph of soldier ants working together for their survival. This is probably why the artist is the man who stops to "watch red ants in their cheerful handshakes," a scene which would ordinarily not attract the attention of many. Izuu Muoneme's "Harmonius Blossom" - a mix media whose forms are arranged with found objects in a vegetative/flora appeals, provides the viewers with pleasant visual luxury of art forms.

Other works worthy of mention for their creative and artistic flavors include Vera Nwokokoh's "Reconciliation"—a print with etching and woodcut technical combination, Victoria Ukpera's "Untitled"—a textile of the tie and dye rendition and Dolapo Fawale's "Togetherness" of candle wax technique, all reminiscent of Paul Igboanugo's creative style.

In "Victory" a rounded image, Richard Ahonkhai probably adds to the knowledge of carving methodology in his own creative modesty. The "Victory" is the "V" shape of the fingers executed on the aesthetically luxuriant ebony wood. His counterpart, Francis Ejiofor in "Egwu Ozo" reveals an artistic and conscious manipulation of metal forms to achieve rounded images with aesthetic equitability. "Egwu Ozo" depicts figurines of titled men in a dancing form in royal pageantry executed with metal found objects. Also in this visual league is Essien Akanimoh's "Reunion", an art piece with authoritative sculptural statement. 32 artists participated with 41 works of art displayed at the Enugu Art fair of course. This show was possible because of the clarion call by the Director General of NGA, Abdullahi Muku and his insistence that NGA artists must "keep their brushes active in painting and their chisels active in creating images of three-dimensionality."



Egwu Ozo- Ozo dance- (Metal) by Francis Ejiofor