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**Author**

Wolff, Rebecca

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## **PART II**

### **Creative Arts**



## **Artist Portfolio: Two Generations of Artists at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka**

Rebecca Wolff

The following portfolio features the work of two generations of artists at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). Since the 1970s, the university's Department of Fine and Applied Art has been known for the dedication of its faculty and students to socially-engaged art that draws from Nigerian indigenous cultural forms. Both Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi and Walter Frederick Oghenerobor Okpogor continue this mode of practice.

Professor Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi is a prolific artist, scholar, and critic. He received his BA (1992), MFA (1999), and PhD (2014) from the Department of Fine and Applied Art at UNN. He has lectured in the department since the 1990s and has served as its Head of Department. In an excerpt from his essay "A Romance with Vultures," originally published in 1999, he recounts a failed strike at the university in 1996 and condemns the academic environment at UNN during the military dictatorship of Sanni Abacha (1993–1998). His accompanying artworks from the same period demonstrate his adept utilization of the linear aesthetics of *uli*, a form of body- and wall-painting primarily practiced by Igbo women, to express sociopolitical critique.

Walter Frederick Oghenerobor Okpogor is a practicing artist and PhD student in UNN's Department of Fine and Applied Art who is mentored by Ikwuemesi. The work Okpogor created as part of his 2014 MFA thesis project speaks to the exploitation of the Niger Delta's natural resources by oil companies and by the Nigerian government—and to the unrest it has caused. Informed by the rigorous research required of a graduate thesis and by his belief that visual art can help spread awareness of sociopolitical issues, his paintings present analyses of ongoing violence and crises in the region. Okpogor conveys his messages through abstract and symbolic forms and, at times, incorporates designs based on Nigerian indigenous graphics.

The artist portfolio presents an excerpt from Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi's essay "A Romance with Vultures," which first appeared

in his book *A Basketful of Water*.<sup>1</sup> A collection of Ikwuemesi's artwork from 1993 to 1998, the period known as the Abacha regime, accompanies the essay. These paintings and artworks on paper strongly critique Nigeria's political and academic environments during this decade. The titles, materials, and years of creation for these seven pieces are provided under the included images.<sup>2</sup>

Following Ikwuemesi's works, Walter Frederick Oghenerobor Okpogor provides a summary of his MFA thesis and commentary on selected works that he created for this project. The images are captioned and embedded within his contribution. Together, the works of Ikwuemesi and Okpogor signify the importance of artistic dialogue between mentor and mentee when exploring narratives of cultural and intellectual histories.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> C. Krydz Ikwuemesi, *A Basketful of Water: Selected Essays* (Enugu: Charles & Charles, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> All captions and images are copyrighted by Krydz Ikwuemesi.