

**20** **ARAIISM**  
**MOVEMENT**  
20th Exhibition Series



A large, stylized '20' in light blue. The '2' is composed of two thick, curved strokes. The '0' is a single, thick, curved stroke that forms a partial circle.

# **20** ARAISM MOVEMENT

20th Exhibition Series

ARAISM MOVEMENT 20

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Iwalewa Gallery of Art, 29, Chris Madueke Drive, Lekki Phase 1, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria.

Opening: Saturday, September ,13, 2025

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First published in 2025

Manuscript typesetting: George Egunjobi/Mufu Onifade

Layout design: Bala Stephen Afen'oko

Published by Ara Studio Ltd.

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Printed and bound by:

**EXHIBITING ARTISTS**

**MUFU ONIFADE**

AKANDE MAUTIN ABIOLA

GEORGE EGUNJOBI

KESA BABATUNDE

ODUMBO ADENIRAN

ESTHER EMMANUEL

STEPHEN ONI

TAIWO ADEYEYE

EMMANUEL EWEJE



## **ARAISM MOVEMENT**

Araism Movement was established and formally launched on Saturday, July 22, 2006 with an exhibition of paintings in Araism by the proponent of the technique, Mufu Onifade and five of his disciples: Olaniyi Omojuwa, Tope Oguntuase, Dotun Popoola, Abiola Mautin Akande and Jonathan Ikpoza. The epoch-making event was held at Bruce Onobrakpeya's Harmattan Workshop Gallery, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. The show was employed to re-launch the phenomenon of ARA (Aesthetically Rich Art) and ara (wonder) to the sensibilities of artists, art writers, gallery owners, the arts community and the general public. In recent times, every watcher of unfolding events in contemporary Nigeria cannot overlook or undervalue the emergence and prominence of Araism technique – nay the relatively young Movement. Araism is a creative force of reckoning while the Movement serves as a platform of projection to the technique and its many exponents.

What is Araism? It is a painting technique developed on the wings of Yoruba root words. When critically studied, these words aptly describe the visual components of any work executed in Araism technique. They are:

Ara (wonder) – describes the general aesthetic wonderment of the technique.

Ara (thunder) – white blistering lines evident in thunder lightening, but represented in black or dark tone.

Ara (body or skin) – skin pores captured through a microscopic study.

Ara (relation or relative) – inter-relationship among all units of cracked strokes.

However, two Igbo root words listed below also suffice:

Ara (breast) – sensuous feeling derived from Araism is likened to that of a woman's breasts.

Ara (madness) – complex creative madness that produces Araism development.

In 1989, Araism began as a technique invented by Mufu Onifade who has trained many students from 1990 to date. Each student has also worked hard to develop his own style, using the technique as a base.

With the distinguishing elements of one style from another, it also became imperative to create a platform on which these various styles of Araism could be projected; and this paved way for the establishment of the Movement, which now comprises more than 25 exhibited members. More young Nigerian artists are out there looking forward to be part of the moving train. On the strength of regular appearances at exhibitions, Araism Movement has become one of the leading united groups of artists in the history of contemporary Nigerian Art.

Araism as a technique entails a process of cumbersome technicalities deserving of intense experimentation. It was launched in 1988 with a solo exhibition of 32 paintings by Mufu Onifade. On the other hand, Araism Movement was born in 2006 with an official grouping of interested, qualified students (members) who are regarded as disciples – all of them sharing a common fraternity with their teacher. With the emergence of the Movement, we can now reflect on both the technique of, and styles in, Araism. This is made possible by an array of styles developed by Mufu Onifade and other outstanding members of the Movement. Between July 2006 and November, this year (2015), Araism Movement has so far presented 14 shows to its numerous publics. They are:

ARAISM MOVEMENT - Harmattan Workshop Gallery, Vitoria Island, Lagos (2006)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 2 – National Museum, Onikan, Lagos (2007)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 3 – LABAF, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos (2008)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 4 – Naijazz, Victoria Island, Lagos (2008)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 5 – Mydrim Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos (2009)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 6 - National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos (2010)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 7 – Thought Pyramid Art Gallery, Abuja (2010)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 8 - Universal Studios of Art, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos (2011)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 9 – Thought Pyramid Art Gallery, Abuja (2011)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 10 – Thought Pyramid Art Gallery, Abuja (2012)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 11 – Mydrim Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos (2013)

CRADLE OF LIFE: ARAISM MOVEMENT 12 – Studio 18, City of Pembroke Pines, Florida, USA (2014)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 13: RETURN FROM FLORIDA – Red Door Art Gallery, Victoria Island, Lagos. (2014)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 14 – The Moorehouse, Ikoyi, Lagos (2015)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 15 – Nike Art Gallery, Lagos (2016)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 16 – September Gallery, Badagry (2018).

ARAISM MOVEMENT 17 – Mydrim Art Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos (2021)

ARAISM MOVEMENT 18 – Gemini art Gallery, Onikan, Lagos (2022).

ARAISM MOVEMENT 19 – Adeline Art Gallery, Lagos (2023).

ARAISM MOVEMENT 20 – Iwalewa Gallery, Lekki, Lagos (2025)

Araism restates its relevant position in contemporary Nigerian Art with its annual exhibitions meant to discover and project to the world, new creativity and disciplined disciples. This outing at the Iwalewa Gallery is another group appearance to mark our annual feast. We are delighted and grateful to all who contributed in various ways to its success. This show is the continuation of our sustained, register-marking artistic rituals and we are delighted to partner with the Iwalewa Gallery led by Mr. Femi Williams.

## **Gallery Statement**

It is a great honor to present the Araism Art Exhibition. Araism, drawn from the Yoruba word “Ara” meaning wonder and mystery, is more than an artistic technique, it is a philosophy of life and expression.

When I look at the works before us, I see not only colors and textures but also stories: stories of resilience, of heritage, of spirituality, and of the bold future that African art continues to carve out for itself. This exhibition is our way of creating a space where art becomes an encounter where tradition and innovation meet, and where every brushstroke opens a dialogue with the viewer.

At Iwalewa Gallery, our mission has always been to nurture creativity and provide a platform for African voices to be seen, heard, and celebrated. Araism embodies that vision perfectly. It reminds us that art is not just to be observed but to be felt, questioned, and lived.

I warmly invite you to journey with us through this collection. May you find wonder, connection, and inspiration in the world of Araism and this exhibition.

**Femi Williams**

MD/CEO Iwalewa Gallery of Arts

## **ARAISM MOVEMENT 20**

...20 annual shows in 19 years!

The Araism Movement, having been on the art horizon since 2006, has religiously maintained its annual exhibitions with whims and gusto. That we have also appeared a couple of times beyond the shores of Nigeria has also given a perkiness to the integrity of the Movement. It should be noted that the painstaking nature of the Araism painting technique is stifling enough to curry difficulty in execution, which is why we often commend our members who have remained steadfast to both the philosophy and their individual styles of Araism.

Many members who boast at the beginning of the year to participate often get caught napping as they fail to honour the call. As has been reiterated, "It takes neck-breaking commitment and back-bending discipline to promise to be part of any Araism show and fulfill the promise." The impediments are there in the technical difficulty of the technique. Yes, Araism painting technique is difficult to execute!

We missed the last year's edition due to a gallery's last-minute disappointment. While we are still sulking and struggling with the pain of such unexpected lacuna, the Iwalewa Gallery came to our rescue without sweats! On behalf of all members of the Movement who are part of this year's exhibition, I wish to express our

sincere appreciation to Mr. Femi Williams and other Staff and Management of the Iwalewa Gallery for showing leadership and commitment that renewed our hope in the saturated Nigerian art promotion.

Next year, the Araism Movement will be 20. There is already a robust plan of action to commemorate 20 years of untiring activeness and consistency. This includes exhibitions in Lagos and Abuja, Artist talks and lecture. It promises to be momentous. All members who were unable to be part of this year's show will be fully accommodate next year.

While we relish in the mood of celebration activated in us all, we hereby appreciate the full support of Femi Williams' Iwalewa Gallery while also congratulating all members who have participated in this 20th exhibition series.

See you all next year.

For now, please enjoy our menu.

**Mufu Onifade**, Ph.D., fsna  
Founder.

# **Participating Artists**





The inventor of the now famous Araism painting technique and founder of the Araism Movement, Mufu Onifade was born on October 5, 1966. He attended Saint Joseph's Catholic School, Lagos from 1974 to 1980 and Dolphin High School, Lagos from 1980 to 1985 for his primary and secondary education respectively. He proceeded to The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Nigeria from 1986 to

1988 to obtain a National Diploma in General Arts. He won the Best Student Prize. In 1992, he became the foremost Nigerian to master and practise painting on animal skin after going through a professional training under the legendary Lemma Guya of Ethiopia, at the African Art Museum and Training Institute, Debre-

Zeit (now Bishoftu), Ethiopia. He obtained B.A. (Hons.) Fine Arts, from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, with the overall best results in 1997. He also holds M.A. Art History from the same institution in 2010 and Ph.D. in Art History from the African American University, India.

Onifade invented an authentic African painting technique now popularly known as Araism. The experiments with which he achieved this invention lasted seven years (1989 to 1996). He later launched the technique with a solo exhibition of 32 paintings at the Goethe-Institut (German Cultural Centre), Lagos in 1998. His second solo show titled was held at the French Cultural Centre, Ikoyi, Lagos in 2005 while the third was held at the Omenka Gallery in Ikoyi, Lagos. He has also taken part in one joint show (held in London) and participated in over 100 group exhibitions including the first African Regional Summit and Exhibition on Visual Arts (ARESUA 2008) and International Art Expo, Las Vegas (2008). His works have been ceremoniously shown in Ethiopia, Austria, United Kingdom, Belgium, United States, South Africa, etc. He has led the Araism Movement, which he founded to 16 group exhibitions in Lagos, three in Abuja, Nigeria and one international

exhibition at the Studio 18 in the Pines, Florida, USA in 2014.

Mufu Onifade is one of the sixteen artists selected from seven countries (Ghana, UK, USA, Trinidad, Cuba, Brazil and Nigeria) and commissioned to feature at an international touring exhibition titled *16 Pieces*. It was packaged by the Ifa Yoruba Contemporary Arts Trust (I-YCAT), London and sponsored by the London Arts Board in 2000. He was curator/artist-in-residence for the Ajibulu-Moniya Gallery, Lagos between 1997 and 2002. He has also contributed critical reviews to journals, newspapers and exhibition catalogues since 1999.

In 2010, Mufu Onifade was selected to take part in a 3-month Residency Programme along with four other international artists at the Greatmore Art Studios, Cape Town, South Africa. He also took part in a combination of festivals by the Thupelo International Artists and the Great Walk and More Artists held in Cape Town, South Africa. The Residency Programme was rounded off with a group exhibition titled 'Angaza.' He was between 2000 and 2002 Contributing Editor of Nigerian Videos, an arts, culture and entertainment magazine published in the UK. He maintained a twice a-week critical arts column called *Artssessment* in The Guardian newspaper and later, *Art of the Matter* in the defunct 234Next newspaper.

Mufu Onifade founded the Ara Studio Ltd with which he ventilates his arts practice and business. The Studio was founded in 2002 on February 1, 2005. Ara Studio has also served as home for art training. So far, Mufu Onifade has trained more than 100 artists in his studio.

In 2006, Mufu Onifade founded the Araism Movement as a platform to present young artists (his disciples) to the public, at least, on a yearly basis. He is a member of: Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), National Society of Painters, Sculptors and Printmakers, UK (NS); Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Universal Studios of Art (USA), and more. He founded and has effectively managed Ara Studio, Lagos since 2002. Mufu Onifade is a Fellow of the Society of Nigerian Artists.

*Artist's statement: Art is all the universe needs to exhale as it reels in the aesthetics of creation. The artist is a philosopher whose deep thinking redefines universal being and comfort.*



Mufu Onifade, *Ancestry*, Acrylic on Canvas, Araism, 77cm x 61cm, 2025

**Iconography:** *Ancestry* is both a solemn and constant reminder of our roots and whole essence. The mask plays a significant role in the identity of our authentic being. The Gelede mask symbolizes the ingenuity of a female heroine (Yemoja) whose bravery and doggedness led to the establishment of the first women cult. It is revered. It is honoured. It is appreciated.



**Abiola Mautin Akande**, popularly known as Oldskool, is a pioneering member of the Araism Movement, an art movement in Nigeria that promotes a distinctive art technique called Araism. The technique entails the use of palette knife as against normal brushes in creating different tones and shades with a batik-like crackling effect on canvas. Ara as a technique was invented between 1989 and 1996 Mufu Onifade. Expectedly, the uniqueness of Araism painting technique has endeared it to the Nigerian media, the public, art patrons and scholars.

A 2004 graduate of Fine and Applied Arts from the famous Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Mautin hails from Ikoga village in Badagry Area of Lagos State. He is currently a staffer of the Nigeria French Language Village (an Inter-University Centre for French Studies) located in Ajara-Badagry, Lagos State. Mautin has always been a consistent Araism disciple and also the first of Mufu Onifade's early disciples who proved the critics wrong about the authenticity of Ara as a painting technique. He did this by employing delineating strokes, motif-like border and linear strokes as a distinguishing style of the Araism technique.

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*Artist's statement: My goal is to create strokes that will inspire those who see my work, to discover beauty in unusual places and be vigilant with happenings around the world.*



Abiola Mautin Akande, *Ko Le Gbe Ni Nlo*, Acrylic on Canvas, 60cm x 50cm, 2024

**Iconography:** We encounter a profound Yoruba adage frequently enacted by the Ayan (the drummer): *Ko le gbe'ni lo / Ko le gbe'ni lo / Odo to ba toju eni kun / Ko le gbe'ni lo*. The work addresses a narrative of a prosperous individual asserting dominance over those less-endowed. However, as the rhythmic beats reverberate, a poignant realization unfolds, prompting the affluent figure to recollect his roots. It is a reminder that despite divergent paths and fortunes, the affluent and the less-endowed share a common origin often intertwined in the fabric of life, especially during their formative years.





Abiola Mautin Akande, *Oju Nii Alakan Fi So Ori*, Acrylic on Canvas,  
91.44cm x 76.2cm, 2020

**Iconography:** The proverb suggests there is wisdom in being conscious of one's environment. This becomes necessary to avoid unnecessary calamity. A man who is unaware of the happenings in his environment is considered a foolish person - or man who lacks wisdom.



Abiola Mautin Akande, *Madam Kofo*, Acrylic on Canvas, 60cm x 50.8cm, 2021

**Iconography:** This brings to mind a popular character called Madam Kofo in the 1980's NTA television drama series titled 'The Second Chance'. Madam Kofo is always full of life and is known for her gorgeous and elaborate head gear. And that is her signature tune.



**George Egunjobi** is a multidisciplinary visual artist whose creative journey finds its roots in Yoruba heritage. Born and raised in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria, his earliest exposure to art came from the sacred masquerades, textiles, mural decorations and oral traditions that animated his surroundings. Immersed in an environment rich with folklore, ceremony, and collective memory, George's understanding of art has never been detached from life. It has been visceral - alive in the Egungun festivals - in the hands of local aso-oke weavers, in the way community stories are passed down. These early experiences planted the seeds for what would

become a career marked by deep inquiry, radical imagination, and cultural preservation. Egunjobi combines traditional academic art path, and self-defined route - learning from elders, exploring the spiritual symbology of African cloths, and absorbing the philosophies embedded in indigenous practices. Over time, he began to understand his role not merely as a maker of images, but as a transmitter of memory and a visionary of possible futures.

Egunjobi graduated from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, where he specialized in Painting and Mural Decorations. From 2010 to 2015, he taught Culture and Creative Art at high school level, from Jalingo, Taraba State, Ile - Ife, Osun State and Abeokuto, Ogun State, inspiring students through cultural education and creative expression. During this time, he fostered young talent and promoted appreciation for artistic traditions. In 2016, he migrated to a full-time studio practice. He became a Resident Artist at the June 12 Cultural Centre, kuto, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

*Artist's statement: A defining feature of my practice is the fusion of modern urban aesthetics with ancient symbolic systems. Layers of paint and cloth fragments speak a hybrid visual language - one that is at once futuristic and deeply rooted. The aesthetics in my work carry the pulse of the African, the echo of Yoruba traditions, and the optimism of a generation dreaming beyond borders.*





George Egunjobi, *Layers of Memory*, 150cm x 120cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** In Yoruba Egungun tradition, the masquerade serves as a living embodiment of ancestral presence. The figure's robe, composed of intricate black-and-white patterns, recalls the layered fabrics of Egungun attire, each layer symbolizing generations of memory, identity, and protection. These motifs suggest that the memory is not singular but a collective inheritance, interwoven with cultural continuity. The upward orientation of the figure conveys reverence to the ancestors while the plain background heightens the visual and symbolic weight of the garment.



George Egunjobi, *Ancestor Colours*, 150cm x107cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** A reflection on the enduring dialogue between ancestry and cultural identity, it is an unbroken bond in Yoruba tradition. The figures embody ancestral spirits whose presence sustains the living. The geometric forms, symbols, and motifs recall indigenous knowledge system - from proverbs to spiritual emblems. The vibrant palette expresses the vitality of heritage and continuity. Ancestral colours positions the ancestors not as distant figures of the past, but as active guardians in the rhythms of memory, ritual, and life in its collectivity.



George Egunjobi, *Expectation*, 122cm x 91cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** A new life is seen here through the composition of layered patterns and vibrant colours. The rounded form is suggestive of fertility and the nurturing body while the intricate motifs within symbolize cultural heritage, continuity, and protection awaiting the child. The upward tilt of the head reflects hope and reverence. The piece is a renewal and the promise of tomorrow. Expectation of a New Baby captures both personal joy and communal significance, where birth is celebrated as the arrival of the future.





**Babatunde Kesa** is a talented Nigerian artist who channels his creative ideas through the medium of painting. With a distinctive style and temperament, he employs bold and vibrant palettes that have become a defining hallmark of his work. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Babatunde is recognized for his exceptional creative prowess and artistic abilities.

Graduating from the Auchu Polytechnic, Edo State, Babatunde emerged as the Overall Best Student, earning a prestigious HND in Painting with a distinction. His artistic vision is deeply influenced by the works of colorists and abstract expressionists, drawing inspiration from his immediate environment, life experiences, thoughts, and aspirations. He employs his art as a powerful instrument as he seeks to awaken viewers from their unconscious state of mind, thus leading them on a transformative journey towards a higher level of consciousness. Through his expressive paintings, he prompts contemplation and invites a fresh perspective on life and the world.

Babatunde's talent has been widely recognized, and he has proudly showcased his artworks in numerous exhibitions, both locally and internationally. His comprehensive body of work reflects his dedication to his craft and his commitment to sharing his unique artistic vision with a broader audience.

With a friendly and professional demeanor, Babatunde continues to explore new artistic horizons, leaving an indelible mark on the art scene with his captivating paintings and thought-provoking creations.

*Artist's statement: My artistic practice is a profound exploration of the human experience, driven by an insatiable curiosity about the complexities and challenges of life. Through my work, I strive to create beacons of hope that resonate with individuals navigating adversity in contemporary society.*



Babatunde Kesa, *Strength and Ability 2 (Race Series)*, 61cm x 76cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** Life's journey is a race where unique strengths help us achieve goals and overcome challenges. Focus on developing your strengths, and every step forward is a victory.



Babatunde Kesa, *Metamorphosis (Race Series)*, 76cm x 61cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** This is a depiction of life's journey through three stages: innocence, strength, and wisdom. It reminds us to cherish every moment, embrace change, and find meaning in each stage of life.

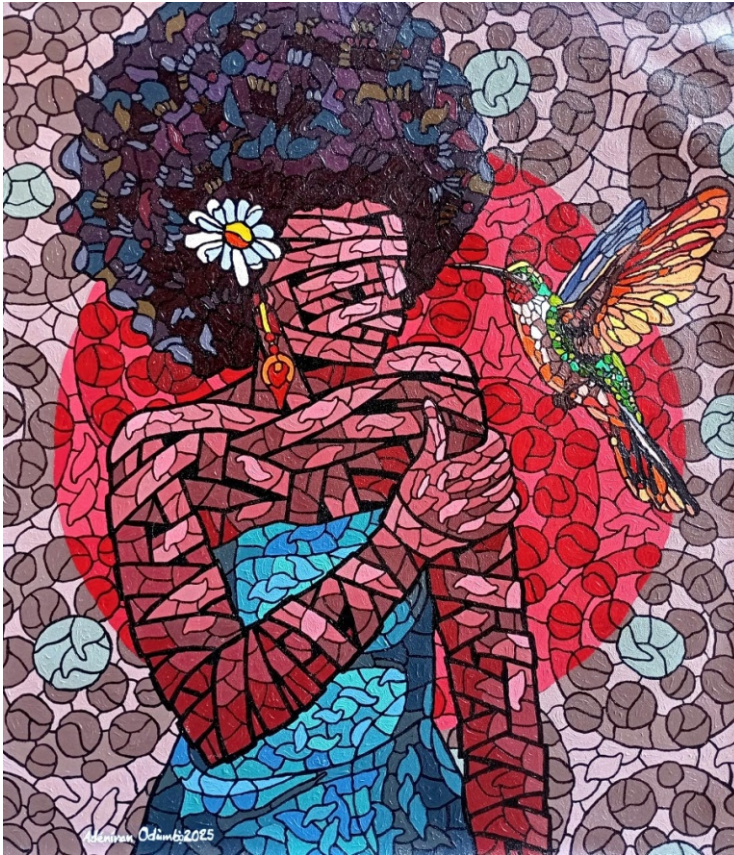


**Adeniran Odumbo** holds a B.A. (Hons.) Fine Arts from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. As an undergraduate, he served as the Curator of Fine and Applied Art Students Association for two terms; he facilitated and coordinated exhibitions, workshops and art competitions. Earlier between 2003 and 2006, he was trained by Jonathan Ikpoza at the Jonix Art Studios in Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria. He had his Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme at De-Factori Studio, Ebute-Metta, Lagos.

Odumbo who is a member of the Araism Movement has his own stylistic approach, a blotted stroke taking the shape of a leaf. He has participated in many of the Araism movement's exhibitions in Nigeria and its first international show at Studio 18, Pembroke Pines, Florida, USA in 2014. He was given an award for Cultural Contribution by the Mayor of Pembroke Pines, Florida. He has participated in other exhibitions and competitions, one of which is the Modharfest's Art in Healing competition where he emerged winner in 2021. He also emerged winner at the Ore Apparel's Lagos of Yesteryears Competition. He has taught art on part-time basis at elementary and secondary schools.

*Artist's statement: I create my art from a unique vantage point, bringing a new outlook to the viewers from my own lens, which allows them to immerse themselves or interact with each unique piece. My work is inspired by the reality of our vulnerability, frailty, strength and hope embedded in humans. It also explores tendencies, that is, inclinations, plights, challenge, hope, joy and doggedness as expressed by humans.*





Adeniran Odumbo, *Fragility and Fortitude II*, 60cm x 68cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** 'Fragility and Fortitude II' honours the intricate balance of vulnerability and resilience within women.





Adeniran Odumbo, *Fragility and fortitude III*, 60cm x 76cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** '*Fragility and Fortitude III*' honours the intricate balance of vulnerability and resilience within women.



**Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel** is the first and only active female member of the Araism movement. Born March 19, she hails from Ondo State. She graduated, specializing in Painting and obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the Obafemi Awolowo University in 2009 and obtained her Masters of Arts in Art History from the same prestigious university in 2021. Her debut into the Araism world officially began at National Theatre, Lagos, venue for Araism Movement 3 exhibition in commemoration of the Lagos Art and Book Fair (LABAF) organized by the Committee for Relevant Art (CORA). She has since maintained her regular feature in private and public art practice and exhibitions.

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Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel, *Idan*, 80cm x 60cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2024

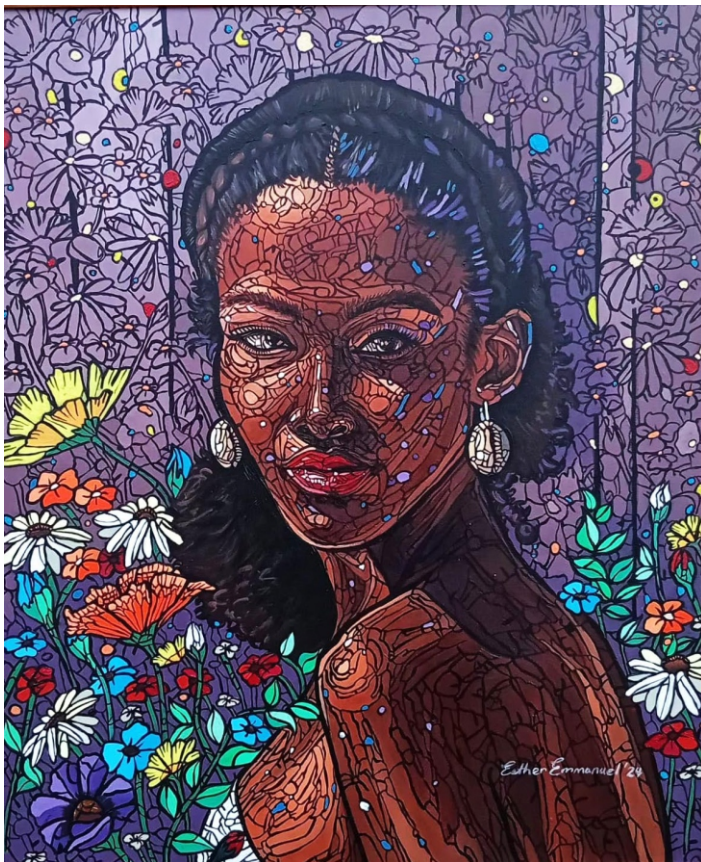
**Iconography:** *Idan* is a Yoruba eulogy in salute to someone with a high standard or a wealthy or influential person. It is a glamorized word by the youth often used as a common slang among peers to praise. There is a type of aura that follows personalities of wealthy standards; it is an unspoken language and an indirect reflection of his or her charismatic nature.





Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel, *Ethereal Bond*, 80cm x 60cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2024

**Iconography:** This is the inexplicable bond between two siblings – divine with a tint of magic. The older sister hovers around the younger one like a little mother, catering for her within the means and capability of her own fragile mind and strength. Growing and developing side by side, they share dreams, aspirations and goals while still enveloped in a fairy tale world of their own world of possibilities.



Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel, *Delicate*, 50cm x 60cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2024

**Iconography:** Self-conscious of her beauty, she sits transfixed, surrounded by intricate colorful flower petals. Her delicate features match her surroundings. She is unbothered and lives in a seemingly imaginary world where all that matters is delicate!



Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel, *West Meets West*, 63cm x 48cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** The Yoruba people populate the southwestern part of Nigeria. It is a rich and colorful culture, popularly known for its native woman attire called 'Iro and Buba' made of Aso oke woven fabric. This unique fabric connotes prestige and elegance. The character here embodies an aura of ambience and sophistication which depicts the Western Yoruba culture. She seals the energetic look with a western fashion statement with Dolce and Gabanna sunglasses. In summary, western Yoruba fashion meets western European fashion!





Esther Ayodeji Emmanuel, *Universal Language*, 122cm x 93cm,  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** There is a universal language understood by all cultures irrespective of their spoken tongue. It is called celebration. The mood of celebration can be appreciated by anyone even without really understanding the significance of the cultural peculiarities attached to it. The physical costume worn in two different countries during their annual carnival by one person, and this signifies unity.



**Stephen Oni** is a multidimensional Nigerian artist, with career spanning numerous exhibitions, awards, commissions and publications. Celebrated for his captivating masterpieces that bring African cultural heritage into reality, he attracts art enthusiasts and collectors to step into a world of possibilities, evoking a profound connection with his artistic vision. He studied Fine Arts at the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife. With oil and acrylic pigments, he explores three dimensional materials to create amazing effects rendered on canvas as his medium of expression. His body of works leverages on abstraction and realism. Stephen uses his Art as a

medium to address public debates, advocate global peace and humanity wellness through art therapy activities. His early career was shaped under the tutelage of the prolific Artist Gbolade Omidiran.

Oni won United Nations MDGs 1st position Art Poster Award and Painting medal from Catirina di Medici. He has participated in the UNESCO *African Week* exhibition held in France, Beautiful Nigeria, a group exhibition at the National Museum, Lagos, Painting Colour exhibition at Bougie Art Gallery, Canada, AAF Photography workshop, and Artworksrv in U.S.A. He also took part AraisM Movement 5 exhibition held at the Mydrim Gallery, Lagos; Mother Drum Festival show in USA, Aesthetic Bond at the Didi Museum, Lagos, Brush Carmen Art Expo in Mexico, Bruce Onobrapkeya's Harmattan Art workshop, and Spotlight Art Collective in India,

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*Artist's statement: My creative expressions are vibrant reflection of aestheticism, deeply rooted in the rich philosophical heritage of Africa. Through a diverse range of painting mediums, including innovative mixed media techniques, I skillfully capture the complexities of human emotions through Black Women beauty and Cultural engagements.*





Stephen Oni, *Amuludun*, 122cm x 122cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** Two Yoruba drummers playing the Gangan and Bata drums. Their services are often essential to entertaining guests at events, adding vibrancy and colour to ceremonies. In African tradition, drummers are prominent features in royal settings where they welcome special guests with their rhythmic performances. Beautiful events and social gatherings are considered incomplete without the sound of drums, which symbolize harmony and celebration.



Stephen Oni, *Aso Ebi*, 122cm x 122cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2025

**Iconography:** *Aso Ebi* is a beautiful uniform clothing tradition in Nigeria, typically worn by family and loved ones during various celebrations such as weddings, housewarming, funerals, and other events. One of the unique aspects of *Aso Ebi* is that while everyone wears the same fabric, each individual has the freedom to design and style their outfit as they please. Yet it is called uniform.





Stephen Oni, *Awelewa*, Acrylic on Canvas, 92cm x 60cm, 2025

**Iconography:** *She embodies African beauty: radiant with love, glow with kindness, and flowing with wisdom. Her passion rises above barriers. Her beauty flows like untamed rains with beautiful eyes that mirror the skies' deep veins.*



**Taiwo Adeyeye** hails from Osun State, Nigeria. He was trained at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife where he obtained a B.A degree in Fine Arts. He is as seasoned and prolific mixed media artist. However, he has been able to carve a niche for himself with a style Brickysm, which is a bold and textured art style that builds visual stories block by block, like laying bricks, adorn with Ona pattern. This style blends structure with creativity where solidity meets expressive design. The flair for ornamentation in Taiwo's works started in 2006 in the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife where he devoted full attention to the study

of Ona with a view to discovering the points of relatively. Ona is Yoruba word for Arts and culture. It is also used for design and ornamentation or embellishments of an already made design. He has won awards and has participated in some art exhibitions in Nigeria and abroad. These include two solo shows. His works been collected by private and public clients within and outside Nigeria. He has taken part in Araism Movement 3, and 5 and such other shows as Youth Day Art Exhibition (2004), Maiden exhibition by the Atunda Group of Artists by the Ondo State Council for Arts and Culture, Akure (2004), African Beauty, Fine Arts students Association, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife (2005), Art is Life by FASA, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (2006), Glimpses of OAU 35th convocation exhibition (2007), Footprints, FASA exhibition, OAU, Ile-Ife (2007), and more.

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*Artist's statement: Our culture is our identity; it lives in and evolves through us. Wait not for the dawn, for we are the present and the past. We are also part of the future.*



Taiwo Adeyeye, *Aje*, Acrylic on canvas, 107cm x 90cm, 2025

**Iconography:** Before the colonial era in Nigeria, societies had already developed monetary system to facilitate their trades. Some currencies used include beads, cowries, copper bar, textiles and manilla.

By the time Nigeria was fully under the British, Gold coin, silver, bronze, Nickel and naira notes were fully in circulation





Taiwo Adeyeye, *Asa Wa*, Acrylic on Canvas, 107cm x 90cm, 2025

**Iconography:** Our music, our culture are our pride. It's the identity that distinguishes us from other peoples. Also, it connects us to the ancestors and tradition. This is the sum of our ways of life.





Taiwo Adeyeye, *Moment of Joy*, Acrylic on Canvas, 107cm x 90cm, 2025

**Iconography:** Moment of joy and peace of mind are the beauties of life. Life may throw some untoward moment at us, but when the situation is overturned, our hearts are filled with joy.



**Emmanuel Eweje** offers a unique perspective in the realm of contemporary art. Driven by a deep passion for creative diversity, he has a keen eye for design and beauty. He hails from Agbeye, Odo-Otin Local Government Area of Osun State. He was born on the 4th of April, 1990 and has devoted his whole time to art. A graduate of Fine and applied Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, he majored in Textile Design with a minor in Ceramics. He has participated in competitions and exhibitions, including the Spanish Visual Art Competition (2014 and 2015 finalist), Damian Art Competition where he won the Still Life category; and Life in my City Art Festival (2015

finalist). He also won the Art Category in the OAU Next Rated Star Competition. He has won the famous Felabration Art competitions thrice until he was asked not to participate again. He is a versatile artist who loves to explore different areas of art.

With specialization in thread painting, Eweje has succeeded in exploring the use of thread to produce works in Araism. This serves as an alternative medium to acrylic or other such pigments. He is indeed committed to exploring thread to as a medium of painting. Araism Movement 15 marked his debut in the Movement's exhibition series. His works have been showcased in various exhibitions and competitions, both locally and internationally, including the Connect residency/exhibition in Chicago.

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*Artist's statement: As a child growing up in the tranquil Nigerian rural town of Agbeye, I was deeply influenced by my mother's small-scale business in textile weaving and crocheting. It was always a joy for me to do the cleanup chore, as it affords me close contact with textile and to collect colourful fabric pieces left for waste.*



Emmanuel Eweje, *Glimmer of Hope*, Acrylic on Canvas, 72cm x 72cm, 2025

**Iconography:** *Even in our darkest moments, a glimmer of hope shines bright to light up our ways. It's the spark that ignites resilience, fuels perseverance, and reassures us that brighter days are on the horizon.*





Emmanuel Eweje, *Overthinking*, Acrylic on canvas, 72cm x 72cm, 2025

**Iconography:** *Overthinking can be overwhelming. It's like a mind stuck in a loop, replaying thoughts and worries over and over. It can lead to anxiety, stress, and depression. Finding ways to calm one's mind, like meditation, exercise, or talking to a friend, can help one break the cycle and focus on realities.*



Emmanuel Eweje, *Brothers in Sync*, Acrylic on Canvas, 92cm x 92cm, 2025

**Iconography:** This captures the heartwarming bond between siblings who move in perfect harmony, their actions mirroring each other's. This synchrony reflects not just physical coordination but also a deep emotional connection, showcasing the special relationship that brothers share.





Emmanuel Eweje, *Timeless Ties*, Acrylic on Canvas, 76cm x 76cm, 2025

**Iconography:** This captures the enduring bond between siblings, forged through shared experiences and memories while also providing lifelong comfort, support, and love.

