

# BEYOND LIMIT 2023

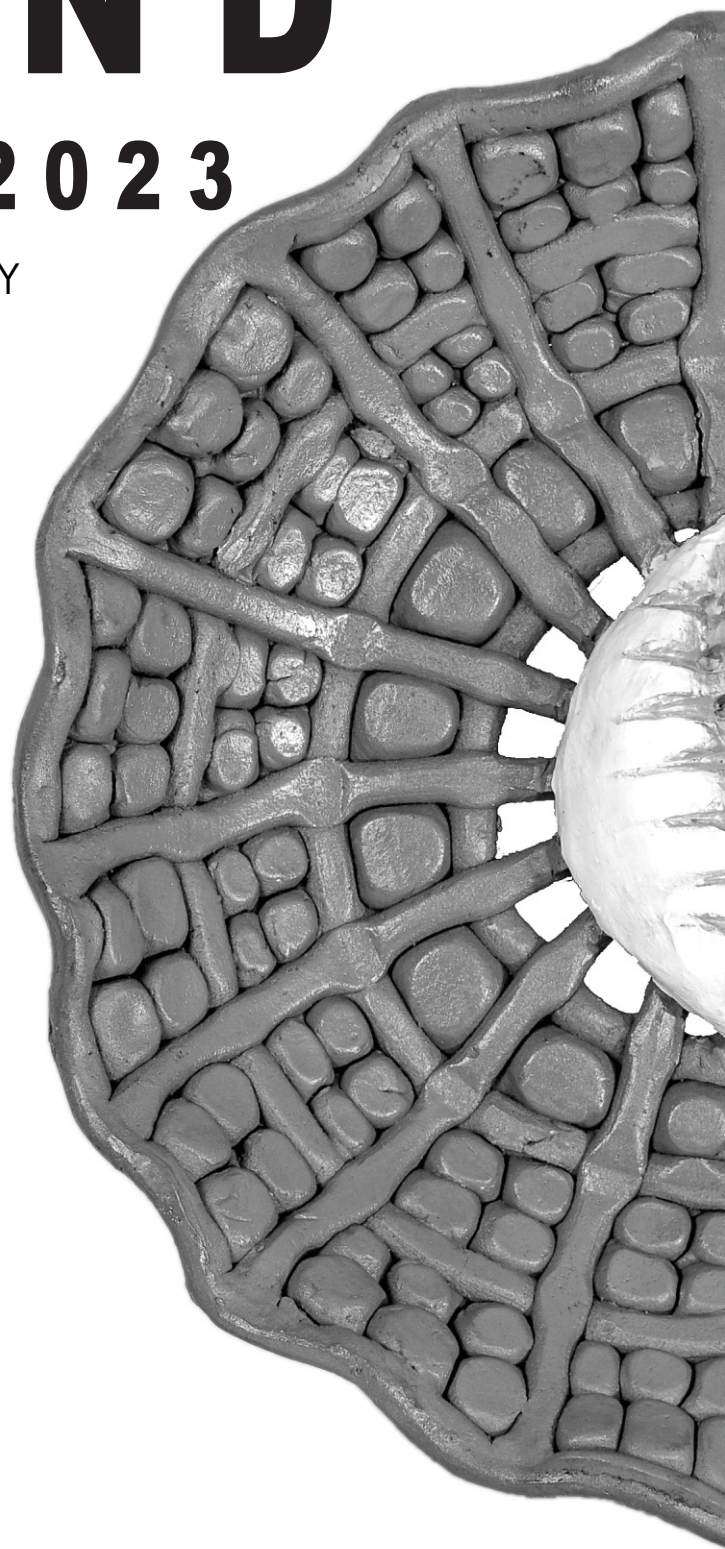
AN EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY  
CERAMICS

## ARTISTS

- ADEOTI AZEEZ AFEEZ
- CHRIS EKUAFEH
- ASUNI WASIU OLATUNDE
- OLUBUNMI ATERE
- AKANNI KEHINDE
- SAMUEL ABIDEMI
- IDEMUDIA MERCY ITOHAN

## FEATURING

DJAKOU KASSI NATHALIE & ATO ARINZE



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BEYOND LIMIT at the Quintessence, Nigeria.*

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QUINTESSENCE

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# BEYOND LIMIT

AN EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS

# GALLERY STATEMENT

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Quintessence is proud to host the second edition of Beyond Limit. It is an initiative that is aligned with our mission, as we continue to create an enabling environment for cultivating local craftsmanship and creativity.

The artists, selected for their varied approaches to the medium, have each been asked to respond in some way to their environment –by considering the history, people, traditions or culture –with an aim to produce a dynamic exhibition that revels in the diversity of the art form itself and the people who created it.

This featured exhibition, Beyond Limit presents the myriad ways in which contemporary clay artists are deploying the medium today. Artists include, Chris Ekuafeh, Akanni Kehinde, Samuel Abidemi, Adeoti Azeez Afeez, Olubunmi Atere, Asuni Wasiu Olatunde, Idemudia Mercy Itohan, Ato Arinze and Djakou Kassi Nathalie.

Curated by Mathew Oyedele and generously supported by Quintessence Gallery.



# FOREWORD

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This is the second edition of *Beyond Limit*, an annual exhibition project conceived by Mathew Oyedele in 2022, which gives ceramic artists an opportunity to show their work to the public in Lagos, the art and culture capital of Nigeria. In the fast-growing Lagos art world, the exhibition of ceramics is still a rarity, and it is this problem that Mathew Oyedele, a young curator and art historian, seeks to address with *Beyond Limit*. What Oyedele is doing with ceramics is similar to what the late Bisi Silva did with photography in the late 1990s. Photography was not accepted generally as an art medium when she started working as a curator in Lagos. However, by the time of Silva's untimely death in 2018, photography had become a popular art medium in Lagos.

The unpopularity of ceramics seems to be a result of the inability of most contemporary Nigerian ceramicists to produce ceramic works that reflect the global contemporary aesthetic and the trends seen in artworks in the fine arts category. Many years after the beginning of modern ceramics in Nigeria, most of our ceramicists have continued to work mainly as potters, producing utilitarian objects such as pots and cups that can't even compete with the exquisite and cheap Chinese wares so abundant in our markets. Nonetheless, the medium of ceramics provides many possibilities that ceramicists can explore to increase ceramic art's appeal and collectability. The suspended ceramic installations of Ngozi Omeje and Ozioma Onuzulike's ceramic tapestries, are good examples of the unconventional artistic possibilities that one can achieve with the ceramic medium. Omeje's and Onuzulike's works have been shown in Lagos. I was at the opening of Ngozi Omeje's *Connecting Deep* at Bisi Silva's Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) in 2018. Omeje's exhibition, where I did see Silva, was the last exhibition she curated before she lost her battle with cancer about four months later in February 2019.

Iheanyi Onwuegbucha, who was then an associate curator at CCA, worked with Silva in her final curatorial work. Ato Arinze and Djakou Kassi Nathalie (a Cameroonian living and practising in Lagos) who are also included in *Beyond Limit*, have made significant contributions in the practice, promotion, and exhibition of ceramic art in recent times. The two artists had a joint ceramic exhibition, *Beyond Functions*, at Moorehouse Hotel, Ikoyi, Lagos in 2016 and Quintessence Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos in 2018.

Ato Arinze's *Untitled* (2022), the only piece he has in this exhibition, is a glazed ceramic work that expresses brutality and abuse through its carelessly applied glaze of different shades of brown, blue and green. The lacerations and bullet holes on the body of the ware reinforce the concepts of brutality and abuse. Djakou Kassi Nathalie's *The Thinker* (2023) – her only work in this exhibition – is different from her other known works, both in the glazing and the distortion of the face. Her use of many colours could be a reference to the thinker's rich knowledge in many subjects. However, the thinker looks brutalized with a red and swollen eye, the black band beneath it reaches to the ear. There is also a bullet hole on the left cheek. Over the ages, a number of thinkers and philosophers have been attacked and killed in different parts of the world because of their unconventional and radical ideas. Recently, Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*, was stabbed on stage at an event in New York by a young man, Hadi Matar, who is sympathetic to Shia extremism and the causes of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Rushdie sustained many wounds and lost sight in one eye and the use of a hand.

Nathalie has influenced a number of Nigerian ceramicists with her style of surface decoration – deeply incised geometric and linear patterns and designs with multiple mask-like faces. Nathalie's characteristic style was influenced by the Congolese ceramicists who taught her and her classmates, the pioneer students of the Artistic Training Institute, Mbalmayo, Cameroon. The influence of Nathalie's complex surface design can be seen in the works of Olubunmi Atere, Chris Onaivi Ekuafeh, Kehinde Akanni, and Idemudia Mercy Itohan whose work also shows the influence of AtoArinze in its delicate finishing.

Asuni Wasiu Olatunde's addition of bronze objects to his work, as in *The Winner and the Runner-up* (2021) where he included two bronze birds, distinguishes his pieces from the others realized solely with conventional ceramic materials. He is a Yoruba artist who got his training at Obafemi Awolowo University located at Ile-Ife, the historical center of Yoruba culture and civilization, where finely cast naturalistic portraits of some kings in bronze and terracotta were unearthed. His use of both bronze and clay in his artistic practice could be seen as a celebration of the mastery that his ancestors demonstrated in their use of bronze and clay. Another graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Samuel Abidemi, approaches his work differently. He combines the natural colour of the fired clay with vibrant colour. Adeoti Azeez Afeez also makes use of colour in his *Profile of My Mother* (2022), though it is more limited, painterly, and luminous. The veristic image of the artist's mother also distinguishes Afeez as an astute draughtsman. His use of the sgraffito technique is quite astonishing.

This set of established, emerging, and young ceramic artists selected by Mathew Oyedele for the second edition of *Beyond Limit* has a lot to offer both local and international art worlds. These artists and the maverick curator have what it takes to pull down the walls that create boundaries for ceramic art, limiting their visibility in the exhibition spaces and galleries of Lagos. I invite you to enjoy the beauty, hope, and creative possibilities that the assembled ceramic artworks offer to our world.

**Tobenna Okwuosa, PhD**

Visual artist, art critic, and writer  
Associate Professor, Niger Delta University  
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa

# CURATOR'S STATEMENT

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I am pleased to present the second edition of the *Beyond Limit* programme. Initiated in 2022, the programme aims to identify, showcase and promote ceramic works in Nigeria, as the genre is largely underrepresented. This year's edition presents works across diverse themes and subjects by **Adéòtí Azeez Afeez, Àkànní Kehinde, Asuni Wasiu, Ato Arinze, Chris Ekuafeh, Djakou Kassi Nathalie, Idemudia Mercy Itohan, Olubunmi Atere and Samuel Abidemi.**

Adéòtí Azeez Afeez presents a vase with the sgraffito drawing of his mother. He explores clay as an earthen material to connect subject and medium in a bid to position women and earth as sources of life. Movement, nostalgia and memories are central to Olúbùnmi Atéré's work. She uses patterns and engravings to comment on societal values and memories as they affect individual and collective consciousness. Àkànní Kehinde's pieces are inundated with motifs and patterns from Yorùbá culture. His work seeks to elicit social consciousness with Yorùbá values, ethics and morals. Samuel Abidemi's focus is on the human capacity to create wealth, independence and adventures. In Chris Ekuafeh's works, survival and comfort takes centre stage. His use of engraved abstract faces on his pieces heightens his human centered narratives. Asuni Wasiu's delicate engraving and scribbles are combined with bronze in his commentary on competition, rescue mission and wealth. Our introductory artist, Idemudia Mercy Itohan combines process with subject as she emphasizes on the conscious patience needed to create ceramic pieces in her work. Her Edo background also provides a useful framework to her subjects. With closed eyes and a colourful glaze, Djakou Kassi Nathalie's piece invites the viewer into an introspective mode while Ato Arinze's untitled piece shows his exploration of glazes as against his signature smooth finishing technique.

From the established artists to the emerging artists, these pieces have been carefully selected to present ceramics as a genre that is not only without limits but also filled with critical theories that strengthen their value.

**Mathew Oyedele**  
Curator



# ARTISTS & WORKS ►





# OLATUNDE WASIU ASUNI

Olatunde Wasiu Asuni (b.1988) is a ceramicist with Bachelor of Arts and Master of Fine Arts Degrees from Obafemi Awolowo University. His works are characterized by Yorùbá motifs and folklores which are explored to deepen his narrative. Asuni was the technical assistant for *Statues Also Breathe*, a traveling exhibition by Prune Nourry in Partnership with Obafemi Awolowo University. He has facilitated and participated in various pottery workshops.

## Exhibitions

<i>Beyond Limit</i> , Yaba College of Technology, Lagos	2022
<i>Motherhood</i> , solo exhibition, Ile-Ife	2022
<i>Inside Out</i> , Ile-Ife	2015





Title: The Winner and The Runner-up  
Medium: Polished and Carbonized Terracotta with Bronze  
Size: 24 x 11 x 7 inches  
Year: 2021



Title: The Rescue  
Medium: Polished and Carbonized Terracotta with Bronze  
Size: 15 x 10 x 7 inches  
Year: 2020





Title: Ajé (iii)  
Medium: Polished Terracotta  
Size: 21 x 9 x 8 inches  
Year: 2022



## OLUBUNMI ATERE

Olubunmi Atere (b.1991) is a ceramicist from Ondo State, Nigeria. Although studied Adult Education at Adekunle Ajasin University (B.Ed 2011), she practiced as a communications professional for 6 years before she gave in to her love for art. She debuted as a ceramicist in April 2022 and has since been exploring the versatility of clay as a tool of communication and a witness to being. After her debut, she went on to bag the Dr Pius Okigbo prize for Technical Proficiency prize at LIMCAF 2022. Her works have been shown in galleries in Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States. She currently works from her home studio in Lagos, Nigeria.

### Exhibitions

Clay Holds Water, Water Holds Memory, NCECA, Contemporary Art Center Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. Curated by Adero Willard	2023
Hands - Koop Projects Brighton, UK. Curated by Helen Roger	2023
Beyond Limit, Yusuf Grillo Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria. Curated by Mathew Oyedele	2022
Life In My City, Thought pyramid Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria	2022
Life In My City Art Festival, IMT Enugu, Nigeria	2022
Ceracerni Art center, Lagos, Nigeria	2022



Title: Pillars  
Medium: Glazed Clay  
Size: 19 x 9 inches  
Year 2022



Title: Paradigm  
Medium: Glazed Clay  
Size: 19 x 12 inches  
Year 2022



# DJAKOU KASSI NATHALIE

Djakou Kassi Nathalie (b.1975) is a Cameroonian ceramicist who moved to Nigeria in 2015 after practicing as a ceramicist and art instructor in Cameroon. In 2016, she participated in the first edition of Beyond Functions held at Moore house Hotel as well as the second edition at Quintessence Gallery in 2018. She emerged as one of the top 100 winners of the Union Bank 100 years Anniversary Art Competition in 2017 and has gone on to showcase her works in several countries including France, United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates.

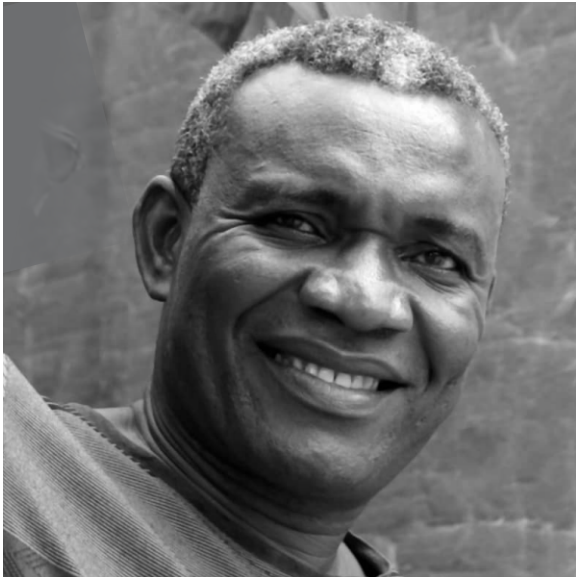
## **Selected Exhibitions**

<i>Art and Exception</i> , France	2022
<i>Beyond Limit</i> , Yaba College of Technology, Lagos	2022
<i>Deus Ex Femina</i> , Akka Project, Dubai	2021
<i>Say My Name</i> , Signature Gallery, London	2020
<i>Contemporaries</i> , Alexis Galleries	2019





Title: The Thinker  
Medium: Glazed Clay  
Size: 39 x 31 x 25 cm  
Year 2023



## ATO ARINZE

Ato Arinze (b.1966) is an award winning artist with a special interest in pottery and sculpture. His close attention to detail has earned him several commissions including the bust of the first President of Nigeria Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe which he executed in the year 2000 as a collaborative project with Chike Oyeka at his studio in Onitsha and the statue of Chief Bode Akindele, The Parakoyi of Ibadanland which was commissioned and unveiled in June 2021 and the combat soldiers at the new office complex of the National Security Adviser of Nigeria.

### **Selected Exhibitions**

<i>Beyond Limit</i> , Ceramics Exhibition, Yusuf Grillo Gallery, Yaba College Technology, Lagos.	2022
<i>Elixir 2</i> , Annual Sculptor's Association of Nigeria Exhibition, National Museum Onikan, Lagos.	2022
<i>Elixir 1</i> , Annual Sculptor's Association of Nigeria Exhibition, National Museum Onikan, Lagos	2021
<i>Beyond Functions 2</i> , Two artists Ceramics/Sculpture Exhibition, Quintessence, Lagos.	2018
<i>Beyond Functions 1</i> , Two artists Ceramics Sculpture Exhibition, Morehouse Hotel, Ikoyi, Lagos.	2016
<i>Root of Change</i> , Solo exhibition of Drawings, Alliance Francaise, Yaba, Lagos.	2015





Title: Untitled Medium: Glazed Clay  
Size: 54 x 28 x 28 cm  
Year: 2022

# Technology, Art and the Shaping of Ceramics in Nigeria since the 1900s

Ozioma Onuzulike

In my keynote address at the 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Ceramics Researchers Association of Nigeria in 2021, I was fascinated by the theme of the conference, “*Ceramics in an Emerging World*”, especially because it afforded me the opportunity to map the historical terrain of developments in the ceramics field in Nigeria in the context of how technology and art shaped the nature of Nigeria's modern ceramics since the early 1900s. As a field that has remained technology-driven, this present exhibition brings to focus the current state of ceramic art in Nigeria.

In this essay, I aim to historically account for the nature of ceramic art production as evident in the current exhibition, especially in terms of materiality and visual aesthetics. I argue that Nigeria has continued to struggle with achieving high temperature firing and stoneware glazes/glazing. I will illustrate this thesis using the history of modern ceramics developments in Nigeria since the 1900s at the government ceramics workshop in Ibadan, and especially since 1952 at the more successful colonial Pottery Training Centre located in Abuja (now Suleja). I will then proceed to show that potters and ceramics artists in Nigeria have relied on art and creativity to make their mark in a very competitive ceramics world using low level technology that worked perfectly for their indigenous forebears.

## **The government pottery workshop in Ibadan: c. 1904 – 1912**

E.H. Duckworth, Inspector of Education in Nigeria during the colonial period and editor of the journal *Nigeria* (later *Nigeria Magazine*), reported what appears to be the earliest modern pottery workshop in Nigeria and probably in Africa south of the Sahara. The pioneering pottery was begun in 1904. In his article of 1938 in *Nigeria* magazine, “The Art of the Potter”, he wrote very briefly about a pottery scheme in Ibadan, southwestern Nigeria, initiated and run by a British potter called D. Roberts. The pottery flourished until 1912 when Roberts left Ibadan. My research has found that it was a scheme to teach both school boys and girls the art of modern pottery production. Photographs of the centre and its products show that pottery materials and equipment were mostly imported and the products lacked local content and competed with imported mass-produced factory ones. Above all, there was apparently lack of technical support for the school boys and girls to carry on with production after Roberts left Ibadan, drawing attention to the complicated nature of glazed ware in a society in which pottery production relied on low-level technology that perfectly worked for their own purposes.

## **Kenneth Murray's experiments of the 1930s**

Another significant early development was the work of Kenneth Murray in Ibadan, Oyo and Umuahia in the 1930s. Murray was Nigeria's Superintendent of Education from 1927. Murray taught his pupils how to fire their clay models in modern wood-firing kilns. It is known that Murray's exhibition of his pupils' works in the Zwemmer Gallery (6 July-21 August, 1937) included terracotta art pieces. My research of Murray's letters to his parents in the West Sussex Record

Office in the UK has shown that his efforts to teach local women potters how to use the potter's wheel and how to fire their wares in wood kilns to attain high temperatures capable of melting their glazes did not work out due to technical deficiencies on his own part. His experiment remained inconclusive.

### **Michael Cardew and the Pottery Training Centre, Abuja: 1952 – 1965**

An earlier colonial pottery scheme in the then Gold Coast (Ghana) in the early 1940s, which tried to improve the traditional pottery into modern medium-technology craft industry inspired the government of Nigeria to do the same in later years of the 1940s. They advertised for a Pottery Officer in 1949. Incidentally the British potter Michael Cardew had been involved in the pottery scheme in Ghana, first at the Achimota College and later at the Alajo Pottery.

The Alajo Pottery was closed down in 1945 because it was making losses under Cardew due to technical deficiencies on his part and the unsuitability of the clay available for him to work in the fashion of Bernard Leach's St Ives pottery which he preferred. But he stayed back and established his own pottery in Vume Dugame in the Votla Region close to the sea.

While the ingenious Vume female potters carried on smoothly with their age-long pottery practice, Cardew's new pottery scheme there was having lots of technical drawbacks especially with the clay available to him there, which was unable to withstand stoneware temperatures. He returned to England in 1948, leaving the pottery in the hands of a young man called Kofi Atthey who inherited his technical difficulties, leading to the eventual closure of the workshop after many years of technical struggle.

Cardew jumped at the opportunity to return to West Africa to 'complete' his pottery project when the government of Northern Nigeria advertised for a Pottery Officer in 1949. His application was successful in spite of his apparent failure in colonial Ghana.

He arrived Nigeria in 1950 and took several months to survey traditional pottery practices around the country so as to advise on his mandate to introduce the production of European style hand-made wares.

At the end, a site just outside the old Abuja town was chosen in August 1951 for the establishment of what was called the Pottery Training Centre (PTC), Abuja. It started operation in April 1952 with four trainees, two each from Sokoto and Kano. It gradually grew to twenty-two staff workers as at 1965 when Cardew retired. Many of the trainee had no formal education to understand glaze chemistry which Cardew tried to teach as a "pioneer potter". Graduates who had studios opened for them could not cope independently with the technicalities of glaze-firing. The implication was that by the time Michael Cardew retired in 1965 and returned to England, no pottery workshop established for graduates of the centre was functioning. The Centre soon turned from a pottery training centre to a production workshop where trainees remained to work for monthly wages. While Cardew was there, the Centre relied on government subvention to stay in production. What was a success however was the artistic qualities of the Centre's production, which was a blend of indigenous forms and decorations with Western glazes and firing technology. This success was epitomised in the hand-built pots of Nigeria's iconic potter, Ladi Kwali. Yet I must note here that Kwali never was able to handle the glazing and firing technology that produced those famous pots. Her job ended with hand-building and decorating the pots. The other technical processes of glazing and firing them were undertaken by Cardew himself and his team of fire-men.

When Cardew retired, Michael OBrien assumed his role. OBrien, an art graduate of the Farnham School of Art, had arrived Abuja in 1963 to study under Cardew after teaching at Leicestershire for 7 years and taking pottery lessons on his own. At the end of six months, he was offered a teaching appointment at the Abuja Secondary School, just opposite the pottery centre. When the Northern government drafted him to the Abuja pottery to take over from Cardew, he was mandated to make the pottery economically viable or it would be closed down in line with the advice of some American economists.

Michael OBrien re-designed Cardew's wood kiln and constructed a bigger one. In his new kiln, he thoughtfully introduced a recuperator which fed the fire box with pre-heated air from down the flues so that less firewood was required to fire the larger kiln and in lesser time. Previously, the old kiln was fired for between 35 to 40 hours. But OBrien's new kiln fired for 20 hours and used less firewood to gain twice the previous output. He appointed foremen to oversee the workers for increased productivity and organised shows in Kaduna and Ibadan which helped to ensure that Nigerians began to buy the Centre's products so that sales did not lie only with the expatriates. Michael OBrien left the pottery and returned to England in 1972.

In all, however, the PTC, Abuja did not fulfill its mandate as a "Training Centre" where potters were trained to be able to go back and set up other potteries. A major critique of the scheme came from Danlami Aliyu who trained at the Centre from 1966 and later (in the late 1970s) with Cardew at Wenford Bridge before taking a Diploma at Farnham by OBrien's arrangement. Danlami had written a thesis that reviewed the traditional pottery practice of Tatiko and the transformation that took place at Cardew's PTC, Abuja. According to Aliyu:

*I think that Abuja Pottery was too advanced for the traditional potters: they could not understand the chemistry of clay and glazes, and they could not afford to buy the machinery, so they thought that it was something only the Government could own, and they would need to have knowledge of administration to cope with the problems.*

This criticism by Aliyu showed that Cardew's colonial project at Abuja was a failure based on the objectives for which it was set up. This situation fired Michael OBrien's determination to continue from where Cardew, his master, stopped.

### **Michael OBrien and the Cardew Legacy: New Potteries of the 1980s and 90s**

Shortly after Danlami's thesis was published as a special issue of *Pottery Quarterly: A Review of Crafts Pottery* (Vol. 13, No. 52, 1979), OBrien was appointed to teach Ceramics at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (located also in Northern Nigeria). OBrien saw it as an opportunity to 'complete' Cardew's work in West Africa. His task became to simplify the complexities of modern pottery production. So, he often took his students out to identify local materials from the immediate environment for use in compounding glazes. He discarded Cardew's use of molecular calculations in the making of glazes because the pure scientific method meant that materials had to be taken to laboratories overseas for testing. In its place, he adopted what he called "Hamada Method".

Hamada was the famous Japanese potter who worked in England with Bernard Leach during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He used the Triaxial method in which glaze materials were practically tried out directly, at the end of which one is able to identify a workable recipe or blend. OBrien resigned from the University in 1985 when his proposal to have students do a 5-year degree course (as against 3) was rejected.

He felt that his purpose was not being achieved in the University setting because 2 years was considered by him as inadequate to train specialising ceramics students to be able to build their own kilns, produce their own glazes and stains, construct their own wheels, which was the only way out of the technological and economic situations in the country. This is an unhelpful situation that persists till date.

Leaving the university setting, OBrien banded with Danlami Aliyu and three other people to start Maraba Pottery near Kaduna. Maraba became OBrien's demonstrative programme in his modern-pottery-simplification project. He also helped Margaret Mama to establish the Jacaranda Pottery in Kaduna. At Maraba Pottery, workshops and other houses were built with mud bricks and thatched roofs in a similar fashion as Cardew's at Abuja and Mama's Jacaranda Pottery as well. Parts of the wood-burning kiln was constructed cheaply with mud bricks. At the beginning, no machinery was used at Maraba. There was only a sieve and a kick wheel to work with! Glazes were made using granite dust collected from quarries, clay dug from around and wood ash generated from the kiln's fire boxes. The kiln ran efficiently and the pottery made profit and good name, although it sold to mainly expatriates. OBrien's demonstrated success at Maraba encouraged other independent potters to set up potteries, often with the technical and financial assistance of OBrien. From the late 1980s OBrien had continued with the mission of nurturing Cardew's pottery project in Nigeria. He taught the "Hamada Method" almost like a creed both at the CPAN annual workshops and at the thriving pottery villages at Mararaba, as well as at Bwari Pottery run by Stephen Mehya which OBrien helped to build. OBrien had tried to simplify the glaze-formulation lessons in the form of cooking, which everyone could relate with. Yet, apart from Bwari pottery which manages to remain in production, doing glazed stoneware pottery for the expatriate community in Abuja, the other potteries that arose from his work at Maraba and the work of Umaru Aliyu who successfully managed Maraba Pottery for many years, have been unable to make glazed ware that are cheap enough for the ordinary people to purchase. Many of them have now resorted to making terracotta pots painted with enamel colours. This resonates with one of Cardew's observations in his report of 1950, which held that "the new methods bring increased productivity and improved technical quality, but they also increase costs and require greater technical knowledge".

## Recent Developments

In 1965, Evelyn Nichodemus quoted Michael Cardew as making the following telling remarks:

*I am becoming convinced that prestige is the main justification for glazed ware production. As a new Nigerian art form we may claim a certain success. But on a commercial basis, hand-made domestic ware cannot compete with imported mass-produced porcelain, mainly from Japan. So, success of the project depends on nursing and developing a true Nigerian style.*



Indeed, at present, I do not know of any studio or factory in Nigeria, run by Nigerians, that makes domestic ware at a competitive level. What we have presently are studios that work in small scale without pretending to be competing with industrial production from both Eastern and Western countries. We also have studio artists now making terracotta pots, for sale in art galleries and art fairs, that have almost dispensed with glazing and high temperature firing. Among these are Ato Arinze who specializes in staining his work's surfaces to take metallic patina, although his work in the current exhibition shows his latest attempt to use glazes in an experimental manner. A new crop of female potters led by Djakou Kassi Nathalie have made name for themselves through carved pots that are most times simply fired and finished with some form of surface patination and, most recently, experimental glazes. This creative recourse to heavily carved terracotta pieces dressed in experimental surface patination appears to have taken root in recent times in the works of formally and informally trained ceramics artists working in Nigeria. In this exhibition, one readily finds this approach demonstrated in the works of Asuni Wasiu, Olubunmi Atere, Idemudia Mercy Itohan, Akanni Kehinde, Samuel Abidemi and Chris Ekuafeh. We have previously witnessed this trend in the works of Nigerian ceramics artists such as Abbas Ahuwan, Chris Echeta and others - an example that was demonstrated in a very innovative way in the ceramic sculptures of El Anatsui at Nsukka and Ige Ibigbami's inspired "pillar pots" at Ife in the 1970s and 80s.

In sum, Nigerian potters and ceramics artists have reinvented themselves through their recourse to art and creativity based on indigenous styles and techniques using production technologies easily available to them. It would then appear that this is how the Nigerian ceramics artists have found their voice in a very competitive creative scene. In line with an Igbo maxim which says that *nku di n'mba na-egheru mba nri* (the fire wood domiciled in any nation cooks their food for them), the handmade ceramic production techniques of our land and its low firing technology that had perfectly served our communities before the introduction of Western-style clay bodies, glazes and high-temperature firing, have continued to provide us the resources to keep our ceramics practice alive. The current exhibition demonstrates how ceramics artists working in Nigeria have continued to creatively sharpen the edges of their own indigenous knowledge systems while striving to catch up with the tall demands of imported ceramics technologies.

*Ozioma Onuzulike is professor of ceramic art and African art history at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka where he is currently Director of the Institute of African Studies. A substantial part of this essay has been taken from his keynote address of the same title delivered at the 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Ceramics Researchers Association of Nigeria in 2021. His own ceramic works can be viewed on Instagram @ozioma.onuzulike.*





## AKANNI KEHINDE

Akanni Kehinde (b.1966) is a graduate of ceramics from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He is interested in Àdìrẹ and Yoruba motifs and icons as an entry point to his works. He uses deepcarvings and engravings to elevate his patterns and embellish the texture of his pieces. Kehinde has participated in a number of group exhibitions including *Beyond Limit 2022* and *Yoruba Ni Mi*, an online exhibition.

### Exhibitions

<i>Beyond Limit</i> . An exhibition of contemporary ceramics, Yusuf Grillo Gallery, Yaba Collge of Technology, Lagos Nigeria	2022
<i>Yoruba Ni Mi</i> , Online Exhibition	2022
<i>SO FAR, The Experience</i> , Graduate Exhibition of Fine and Applied Arts Students, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.	2018
<i>Ifectivity</i> Ife Arts School Competition and Exhibition. Annual Exhibition of Fine and Applied Arts Students Association, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	2017



Title: Orisun (The Source)  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 58.42 x 25.4 x 23 cm  
Year: 2023



Title: Aje (Goddess Of Wealth)  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 51 x 28 x 30.48 cm  
Year: 2023



Title: Immortal Inheritance  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 51 x 28 x 20.32 cm  
Year: 2023



## CHRIS ONAIWI EKUAFEH

Chris Onaivi Ekuafeh (b.1981) is the founder of the growing creative movement, G.A.TO.R, aimed at presenting the art of creativity as not just a resident habit of the artist, but a divine heritage. After his graduation from the Industrial Design Department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, he practiced as a resident potter with Heritage Ceramics, under master potter, Odion Ogogo. His desire to promote creativity, saw him teach art in private schools, where he established art studios. His works can be found in both public and private collections.

### Exhibitions

Beyond Limit, Group Exhibition, YabaTech, Lagos	2022
Oreze 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022... (Onitsha)	
Visions in Clay, Group Exhibition, Moore House Hotel, Lagos	2017
Lagos Biennial, LBS Pan African University, Lagos	2017





Title: Mr and Mrs  
 Sizes: 48.26 x 44.45 cm  
 Medium: Terracotta (cold finished)  
 Year: 2021

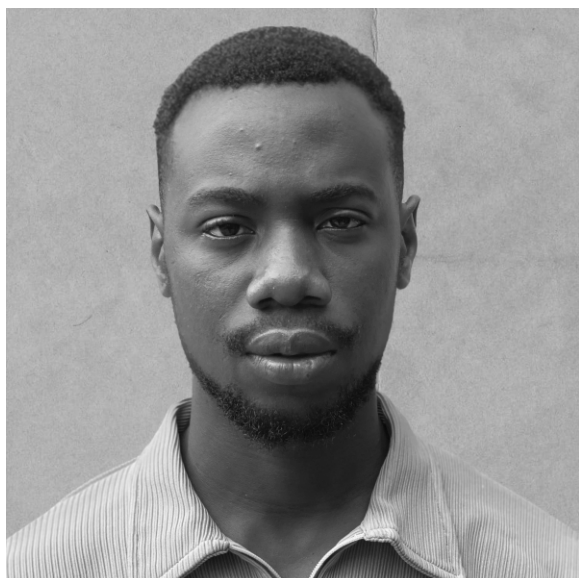


Title: Okeyinfu  
 Size: 25.4 x 35.56 cm  
 Medium: Terracotta (cold finished)  
 Year: 2022





Title: In The Mix  
Size: 56 x 33.02 cm  
Medium: Terracotta  
Year: 2022



# ADEOTI AZEENZ AFEEZ

Adeoti Azeez Afeez (b.1998) is a sgraffito ceramicist whose drawing on engobe-coated clay reveals a contrasting colour. This drawing, usually done with cross-hatching, adds depth, tone and chiaroscuro to his works. He is a graduate of Yaba College of Technology and has participated in a number of group exhibitions including Beyond Limit 2022, LIMCAF 2022 and Colour Theory, AMG Projects 2023. Adeoti also participated in the *Statues Also Breath* workshop with Prune Nourry, in collaboration with Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife.

## Exhibitions

<i>(Sur)face exhibition</i> pt.1 Chilli Art Project, Cheshire, United Kingdom	2023
<i>Colour Theory</i> Exhibition, AMG Projects, Lagos	2023
Artmosfair Exhibition Ceraceni' Art Hub, Lagos	2022
Life in My City Top 50 exhibition tagged " Paradox of Muted Echoes, Enugu	2022
Life In My City Zonal Exhibition, Thought Pyramid, Lagos	2022
<i>Stay Black And Die</i> , Cove Street Art, Portland, USA,	2022
<i>Beyond Limit</i> Ceramics Exhibition, Lagos,Nigeria	2022
<i>Beyond Borders</i> International Ceramics Exhibition	2020
The Convergence Art Exhibition, Ministry of Arts and Culture, Ibadan, Oyo, Nigeria	2019



Title: Profile of My Mother  
Medium: Sgraffito Drawing on Clay  
Size: 46 x 33.02 x 12.7 cm  
Year: 2022





## SAMUEL ABIDEMI

Samuel Abidemi (b.1994) is a graduate of art education from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife with a specialisation in ceramics. He is a member of Society of Nigerian Artists, Ogun State Chapter and has participated in group exhibitions including LIMCAF and *Abeokuta Shifts*, *Alacrity* and many others.

### Exhibitions

<i>L'Atelier</i> , Online exhibition	2022
<i>Alacrity</i>	2022
<i>Ifectivity</i>	2019



Title: Untitled  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 23 x 15.2 cm  
Year: 2015



Title: Arígbábuwó  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 35.56 x 35.56 cm  
Year: 2022





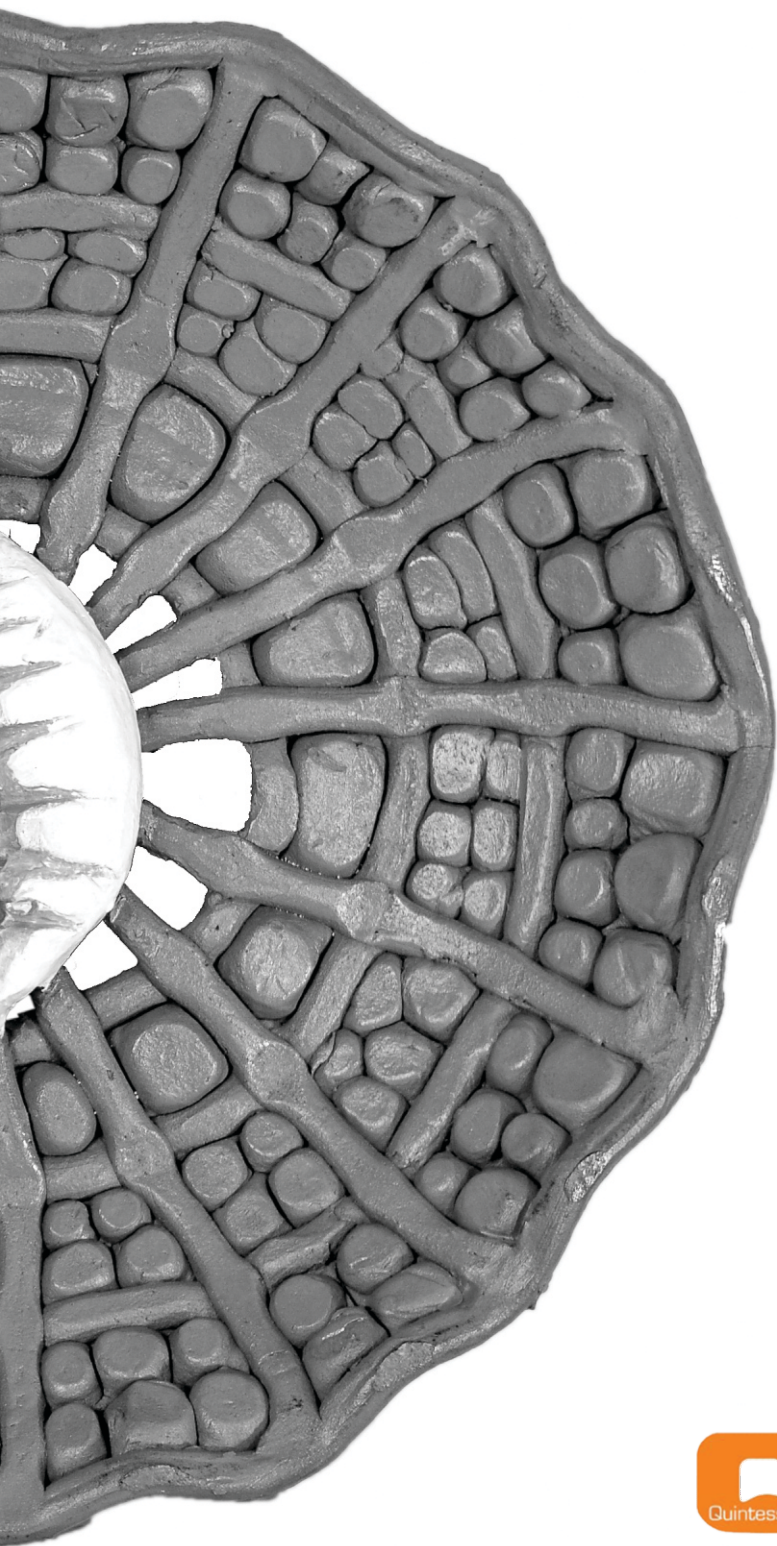
# IDEMUDIA MERCY ITOHAN

Idemudia Mercy (b.2002) Itohan is a student of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and a protégé of Ato Arinze and Djakou Kassi Nathalie. She is the chosen artist for our first edition undergraduate ceramists in Beyond Limit.

Title: Iziegbe (Patience)  
Medium: Terracotta  
Size: 41 x 62 x 62 cm  
Year: 2022



Title : Iye Oba (The King's Mother)  
Medium: Polished Clay  
Size: 80 x 47 x 47 cm  
Year: 2022



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