Anya Fulu Ugo: African Arts Conference Series of the Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

**Theme: African Art and Artists After the Millennial Turn**
*(A Conference of the Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Honour of El Anatsui and Obiora Udechukwu)*

Venue: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria  
Date: 24-27 June 2015

Every progressive community honours and celebrates its best. As Igbo peoples say: *Anya fulu ugo jaa ya mma, na-adi afu ugo kwa daa* (the eye that sees an eagle should adore it, for only rarely are eagles seen). In the field of African art, many artists and scholars have distinguished themselves both in practice and theory over the last five decades. With the exertion of these artists both in Nigeria and abroad, one also likens contemporary African art to an eagle that has completed its cycle of achievements and shed its less attractive feathers in the new glow of maturity and royal radiance (*Ugo gbuzu o chakee*). This is true of some of the major players in the field of African art. In this part of the world, a few of such artists and scholars have walked across our landscape, leaving footprints that continue to be a guiding light to generations of younger artists. In the Nsukka School of art, which was born in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, a number of bright jewels have emerged. Of this sterling group, the maiden edition of the African Arts Conference Series of the Faculty of Arts will honour El Anatsui and Obiora Udechukwu.

**Call for Panel Proposals/Paper Abstracts**

African art today has become more visible and respectable in the global space both in theory and practice. The works of African artists at home and in the Diaspora have increasingly penetrated the global art world through landmark exhibitions and have become the subject of important symposia and publications. While many African artists in the Diaspora have worked their way into major museum collections and other formal art establishments in the West, a number of African artists (such as El Anatsui, Bruce Onobrakpeya and Ablade Glover) have continued to work at home, establishing themselves as celebrated figures who brought fresh and exciting artistic vocabularies to the making and discourse of global art. Eminent African curators, such as Okwui Enwezor, are now playing the game at the highest level, manning such high profile global art presentation and discursive platforms as the Documenta and the Venice Biennale. Major international auction houses are turning their gaze at African artists, and strong auction houses have now emerged within the continent itself. Art schools have multiplied, training contemporary artists working in a diversity of contexts and vocabularies. A lot more indeed have happened and are happening in the field of African art, especially in the last decade.

This conference proposes an interdisciplinary approach to the discourse of the current state of art and artists in Africa and in the African Diaspora. It is our tribute to two important global artists associated with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, whose work over the past four decades demonstrates the multiple layers of critical, historical, and other narrative contexts that African art engenders today. Professors Anatsui and Udechukwu are
acclaimed for creating a respectable body of works that have grown to defy any marginal critical or historical narrative -- a microcosm of the form and content of African art today.

We invite panel proposals from Nigerian, African and world scholars that view contemporary African art and artists from multiple, all-inclusive perspectives, especially, but not restricted to, humanistic studies. We seek to challenge the low level of interdisciplinary discourses within Africa itself on the subject of its contemporary cultural production. For example, how might we critically engage African visual art through the multiple lenses of mass communication, theatre and film studies, linguistics, literary studies, music, economics, anthropology, history and international relations, archaeology, tourism and museum studies, political science, etc.? What range of fresh views and interpretations are possible in the critical interrogation of the life and work of important contemporary African artists who have worked or are working at home or in the Diaspora? How have curators re-thought or not re-thought the long-drawn criticism over their representation or construction of the form and content of African contemporary artistic production based on its few Diaspora artists? In view of rising concern surrounding ownership of Africa’s cultural patrimony and the call for the restitution of Africa’s art objects looted by the West and held in their museums and galleries, how are the leadership of African countries joining the discourse and how prepared are they to handle the objects should they be returned? What is the relevance or role of the available national museums and galleries in African countries (such as the Nigerian National Gallery of Modern Art) to the increasing visibility of African art and artists in the global art world? Who actually benefits from the current surge in the display and commoditisation of African art through the political and economic networks that define global and regional biennales and auctions? Considering the vast range of artistic production today in Africa, what factors might have shaped or conditioned the low level of critical and theoretical engagements with this art on the continent and what new strategies and methodologies are possible? What might be the intersections and divergences between African visual art today and other branches of the arts in general?

We seek panel proposals, which should not exceed 500 words and which should describe the theme and scope of the panel based on the above sub-themes or other important subjects or issues surrounding contemporary African arts in general. The proposals should also include the list of potential participants with contact addresses. Full contact information, such as phone numbers, postal and email addresses, of the panel chair(s) must also be included.

Please submit proposals via email to our Chairman, Prof. Ikenna Dieke, at diekeikenna4@gmail.com or Faculty liaison, Dr. Ozioma Onuzulike, at ozioma.onuzulike@unn.edu.ng on or before December 15, 2014. Accepted panels will be announced by December 20, 2014. Final list of paper abstracts received on each panel will be published by February 15, 2015. Please note that apart from proposed panels, paper abstracts, not exceeding 200 words, based on the conference sub-themes and other related issues, can also be emailed directly to the above addresses on or before February 15, 2015.

We look forward to welcoming you at Nsukka!