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| **Natural Synthesis** |
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| The concept of Natural Synthesis was developed in the 1950s by members of the Zaria Art Society. Developed alongside a gathering momentum towards independence in search of a modern art that would suit the new nation, the group called for the merging of Western and Nigerian traditions, forms, techniques and ideas in the arts into a hybrid artistic practice and conceptual framework. Proponents of Natural Synthesis responded to concerns that much of Nigeria’s artistic heritage was being lost to the influence of foreign culture and academic traditions. Primary ideologue of the Zaria Art Society and the group’s manifesto creator Uche Okeke wrote: ‘Nigeria needs a virile school of art … Whether our African writers call the new realization Negritude, or our politicians talk about the African Personality, they both stand for the awareness and yearning for freedom of black people all over the world … Our new society calls for a synthesis of old and new, of functional art and art for its own sake.’  Incorporating Natural Synthesis into his own art practice, Okeke adapted Igbo indigenous body and wall painting traditions (known as *uli*) into pen and ink drawings, a practice also taken up by Okeke’s student at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, Obiora Udechukwu. Similarly, Bruce Onobrakpeya looked to his native Urhobo culture and the famous Benin bronzes of Edo culture for inspiration in his printmaking. |
| Further reading:  Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield. *Contemporary African Art*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1999.  Okeke-Agulu, Chika., Picton, John. ‘Nationalism and the Rhetoric of Modernism in Nigeria: The Art of Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko, 1960 – 1968.’ *African Arts* 39.1 (2006): 26-37.  Okeke. Chika. ‘The Quest: From Zaria to Nsukka: a story from Nigeria. ’ *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*. Ed. Clémentine Deliss. Paris: Flammarion, 1995.  Okeke, Uche. ‘Natural Synthesis.’ *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*. Ed. Clémentine Deliss. Paris: Flammarion, 1995.  Ottenberg, Simon. ‘Sources and Themes in the Art of Obiora Udechukwu.’ *African Arts* 35. 2 (2002): 30-43. |