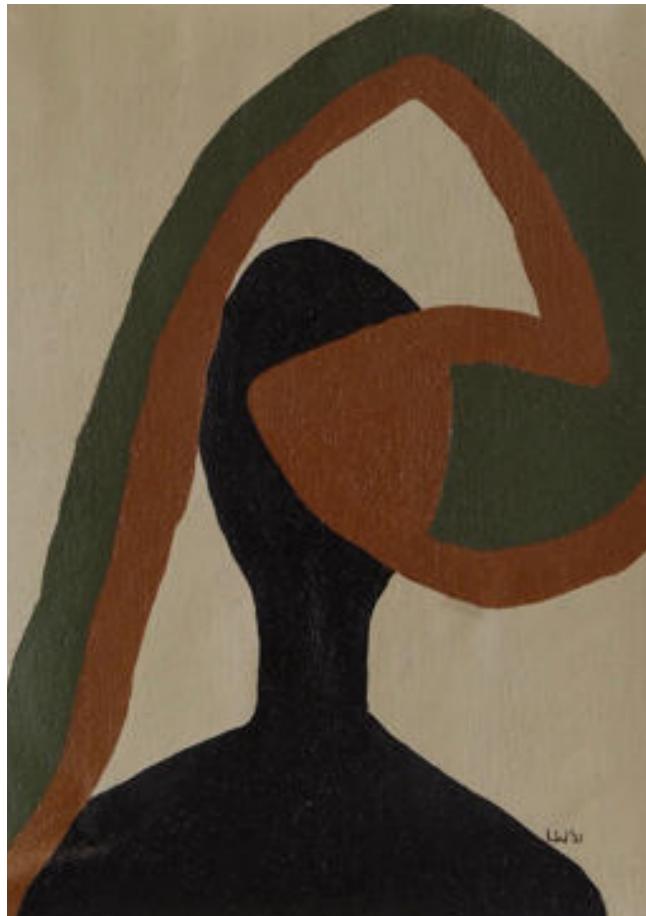


AFFINITY ART GALLERY

# A VERNACULAR HOMAGE TO ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

JULY 2021



**"Our culture is  
our identity."**

- Affinity Art Gallery



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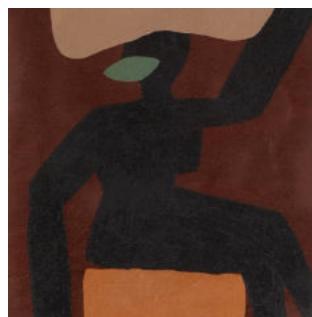
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# CURATORIAL STATEMENT

NAOMI EDOBOR, CURATOR



Photo Credit: Denis Trente-Huittessan

The term vernacular refers to the language or dialect spoken by people in a particular country or region. In art, it forms a wide range of designs, from ordinary objects to unique motifs specific to particular regions. The exhibition, A vernacular homage to architecture and design, is dedicated to this phenomenon: highlighting the specificities of regional art and the importance of traditional principles and design in contemporary art.

It references the importance of traditional principles and design, which in essence connect with the notion of sustainability: works produced with consideration for their wider impact, and their reception in relation to social, historical, and cultural environments. This notion of sustainability is central to local craftsmanship, the use of materials like clay, sand, and thatch having emerged from the ambient natural and cultural environment to create optimum relationships between people and their place. In this sense, sustainability and preservation of cultural identity are complementary.

Using vernacular techniques and textures, recurrent patterns, hues, and grooves in her ceramics, Anne Adams tells stories. The use of symmetry in her works is an operational and harmonious display of interactions with balance and indigenous design. Her works are intimate, familiar, and descriptive, encompassing materiality and questioning the self, origins, and belonging.

The twelve-ceramic works and installation titled “web of time,” together presented in this exhibition, are deeply rooted in the elements of symbolism perceptible in practices of Nsibidi and Mbari and the work of the Bwari people of Abuja.

Nsibidi, an indigenous form of writing, originated from the south-eastern part of Nigeria. Nsibidi symbols and pictograms can be seen in some of Adams' works. These early forms of writing systems appeared on excavated pottery as well as ceramic stools and headrests from Calabar. It was also used to decorate the skin, calabashes, sculptures, and clothing items, as well as to communicate messages on houses.

The Women of Bwari have a history of making ceramics dating back to the 1950s. One of them, Ladi Kwali, a pioneer of modern pottery in Nigeria (1925 - 1984), was built by hand, which is similar to the technique Adams later adopted. During a studio visit with Adams, she made references to the specific tools she uses, which look like wild, black seeds covered with small spikes. These give some of the ceramics their textures and are now part of the cultural collection of the Bwari women.

Mbari is a visual art form practiced by the Igbo people of Southeast Nigeria, a process of rebuilding a sacred two-story house as a ritual to honor their god, Ala. The house that was built, operated as a gift of atonement and a representation of abundance and harmony.

Vernacular architecture is also a principal theme in Mlambo's work, exploring the human condition in imaginative and stylized ways. Mlambo interrogates the pre-colonial African experience through the contemporary mind by studying the patterns similar to that of the women of the South African Ndebele tribe in decorating homes. The patterns communicated on the walls of their homes expressed continuity and cultural resistance to their circumstances, following the loss of the war in the autumn of 1883. This was a channel generated by the people to express their emotions.

Mlambo's approach to her new body of works "Remaining Vernacular" is reminiscent of the textures, patterns, colour, and character of these South African modes of communication. There are seventeen works included in this exhibition with common themes that reflect a deep connection between the artist and her environment. Mlambo explores formlessness in the way the figures are presented: abstract and performative rather than explanatory. In Fudulama, which translates to Be Warm, two abstract human forms are depicted sitting intertwined on a couch, to evoke rest. Earthy and vibrant tones accompanied with the use of sand contribute to the texture and character of her work.

In the present day, the transition towards digital societies, new meanings, agendas, and challenges have been incorporated into worldwide discussions. The need for vernacular art in this new framework addresses issues such as loss of cultural identity, deterritorialization, unsustainable development, and decreasing resilience which are now part of our lived experiences.



# ANNE ADAMS

## NIGERIA

Anne Adams (b 1993, Nigeria) is a contemporary artist, working primarily with clay. She uses the coil technique to build edges and silhouettes, to establish forms, which in turn develops rhythmic families of shapes. Employing the coil method to create ceramic art, allows her intimate freedom of artistic expression, permitting a potential for disruption and flexibility of original ideas, as she works solely by intuition.

Adams currently lives and practices in Lagos. She grew up in Abuja, where she lived and practiced art- painting on canvas, mugs, and flower pots until she had an encounter with Cameroonian ceramist, Djakou Kassi Nathalie, who became her teacher and mentor.

Coming from Nigeria, where there's a common perception of clay as a medium for evil and a representation of black magic, Adams uses her medium to change the narrative surrounding this idea of demonizing what is ours. African pottery was famously looted during colonization, our art was taken from us and we were made to believe it represents darkness. In her practice as a ceramist, Adams has uncompromisingly maintained that Africans and black people in general, need to own and accept our own. The representation of Nigerian pottery should not only be seen in Museums as stolen artifacts but be represented today in galleries and individual spaces, as a primal element of our existence as human beings.

Using Vernacular techniques and textures, recurrent patterns, hues, and grooves, amidst stratification of ceramic landscape, she's able to tell a story of involvement, of our core integration with history, the present, and the future. The use of symmetry in her works is an operational, transformative, reflective, and harmonious display of interactions with proportion, indigenous design, and balance.

She creates a perception of order and beauty, which reflects back on our own physical existence, where symmetrical order is inherently present in our body form and all around us. Her work is a fusion of creativity and mathematics to further bring about a meditative quality that transcends visual rigidity.

Anne has participated in both local and international group exhibitions. She has featured in online publications and televised shows including BBC News Pidgin, Daily trust newspaper, Channels Tv to mention a few.

"ANNE HAS UNCOMPROMISINGLY MAINTAINED THAT AFRICANS AND BLACK PEOPLE IN GENERAL, NEED TO OWN AND ACCEPT OUR OWN"



Photo Credit: Adams Anne



# ARTIST STATEMENT

## SERIES: VERNACULAR ART & TEXTURE

The pieces I created for this exhibition are deeply rooted in culture and tradition. I wanted to create works that encompass structure and design, taking the viewers back to a time where art was created out of the necessity of who people were, their lifestyles, culture, and spiritualism.

My work highlights authentic Nigerian symbolisms, adapted from Nsibidi and Mbari Mbayo art, I also used local tools created by Bwari potters to create textures on the works. The Mbari art was a very sacred form of art practiced by the Igbo people of Nigeria(Owerri). They are a representation of abundance and harmony, according to renowned author Chinua Achebe “Mbari was a celebration through the art of the world and of a life lived in it. It was performed by the community on command by its presiding deity, usually, the Earth goddess, Ala, who combined two formidable roles in the Igbo pantheon as a fountain of creativity in the world and custodian of the moral order in human society.”

On completion of the Mbari, the town leaders would gather in it for a ceremony. Traditionally, the building is then left unmaintained and unvisited—to do otherwise would be taboo, the artists that also create this work of art flees from the town, never to come in contact with their works again.

This was very interesting for me, I wanted to highlight the traditional practices, as in a way it reflects practicing art today in the contemporary world.

Artists may never come in contact with works that they create after it's been sold to a collector and found another beautiful home.

Nsibidi, which is also an indigenous form of writing of symbols and pictograms is highlighted in my work. Early forms of this writing system appeared on excavated pottery as well as what are most likely ceramic stools and headrests from Calabar, with a range of dates from approximately 400 AD. Nsibidi was used to decorate the skin, calabashes, sculptures, and clothing items, as well as to communicate messages on houses. There are thousands of nsibidi symbols, of which over 500 have been recorded. I adapted some documented symbolism to create and highlight the traditions of the indigenous people of Southeastern Nigeria.

The Women of Bwari, have a history in making pottery as a way of life, they usually build by hand, which I've adapted as my technique to create my works, they also use tools they create to give the work's texture and design. I've incorporated these tools and techniques into the pieces I created for this show.

Creating these works, gave me an opportunity to research and create from a place of admiration of what used to be, it was truly a beautiful process.

- Anne Adams



### THE HEART OF BWARI (I)

Glazed and slip painted

terracotta

44 x 32 cm

2021



### THE HEART OF BWARI (II)

Glazed terracotta

53 x 32 cm

2021



**KÀ ÀNYÍ DI NÀ OTÚ (I) I**  
**LET US LIVE TOGETHER**

Slip painted terracotta  
33 x 41 cm  
2020



**KÀ ÀNYÍ DI NÀ OTÚ (II)**  
**LET US LIVE TOGETHER**

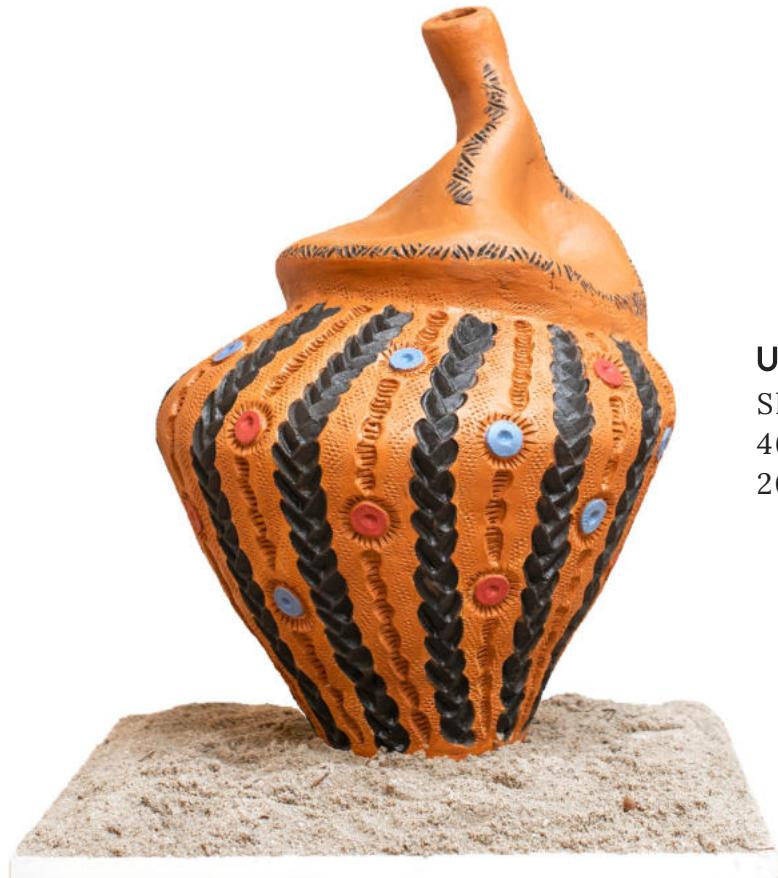
Slip painted terracotta  
57 x 36 cm  
2020



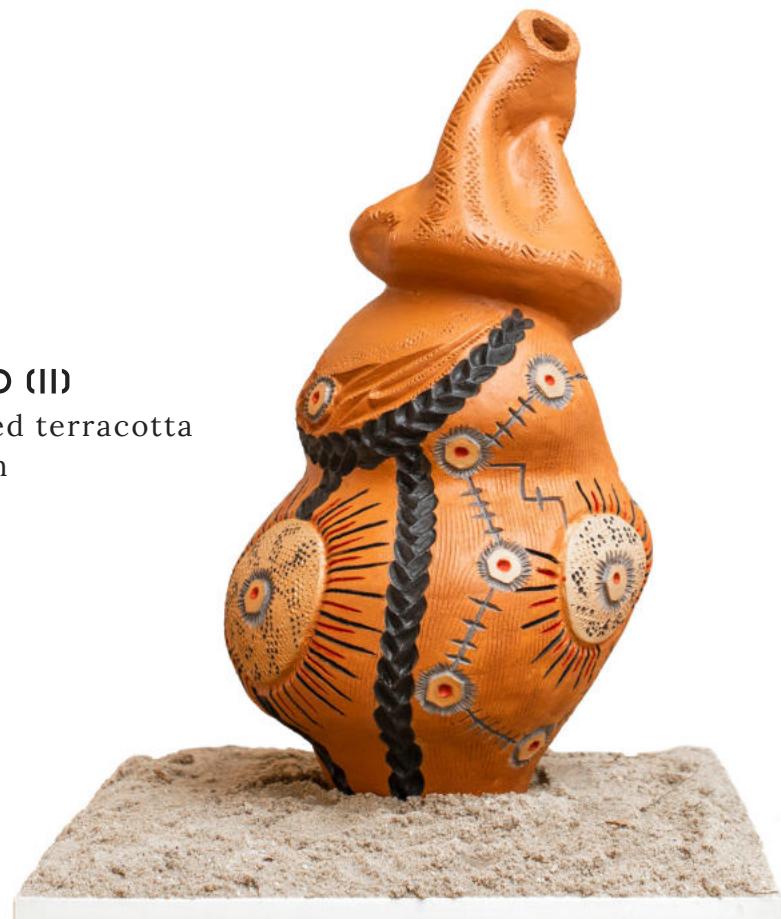
**KÀ ÀNYÍ DI NÀ OTÚ (III)**  
**LET US LIVE TOGETHER**  
Polished terracotta  
53 x 31 cm  
2021

**ÁKAM DÌ ÒCHÁ**  
Glazed terracotta  
45 x 35 cm  
2021





**UNTITLED (I)**  
Slip painted terracotta  
46 x 35 cm  
2021



**UNTITLED (II)**  
Slip painted terracotta  
50 x 30 cm  
2021



**MAZAUNI (I) I  
SETTLEMENT**  
Glazed terracotta  
38 x 38 cm  
2021



**MAZAUNI (II) I  
SETTLEMENT**  
Smoked terracotta  
46 x 27 cm  
2021



**MATYR**

Glazed terracotta

48 x 20 cm

2021

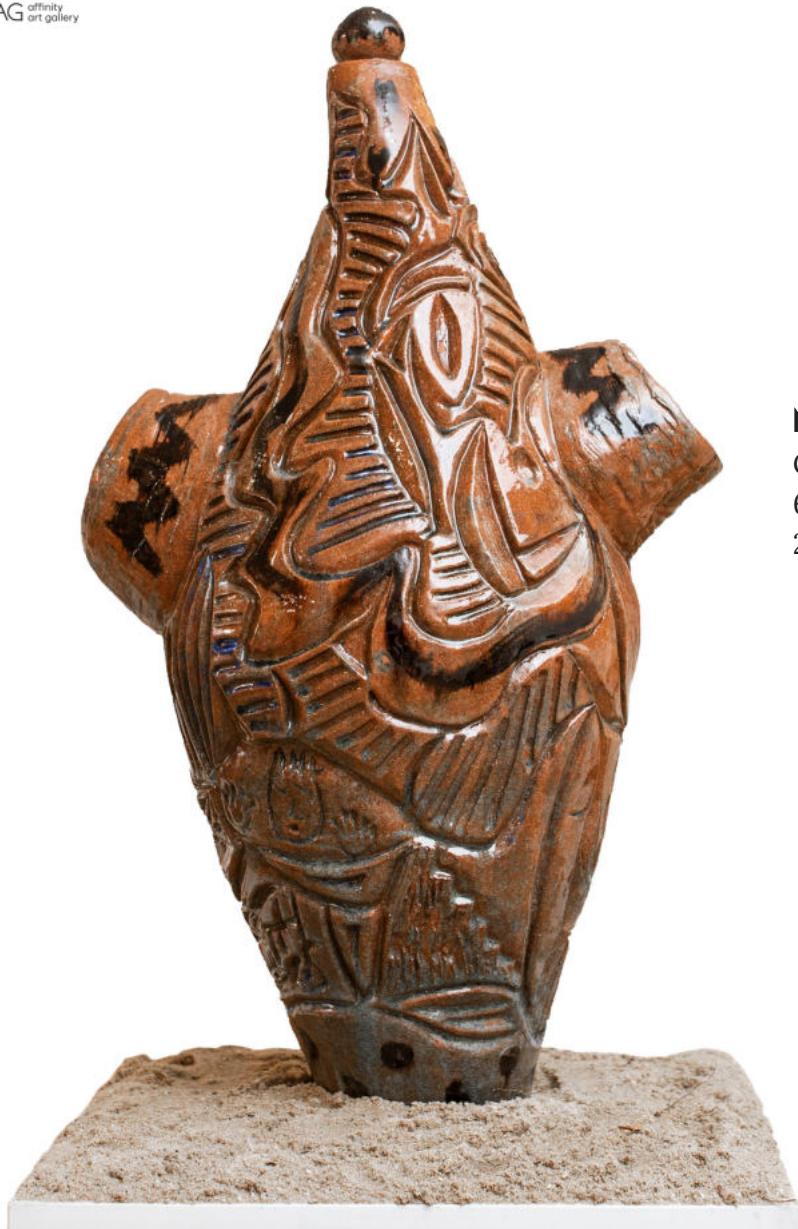


**MBARI MBAYO (I)**

Slip painted terracotta

64 x 23 cm

2021



**MBARI MBAYO (II)**

Glazed terracotta

64 x 36 cm

2021



## WEB OF EXISTENCE

Mixed media

7ft.

2021



# IN CONVERSATION WITH LIVINGSTONE MUKASA

ARCHITECT, CO-AUTHOR, AND ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Photo Credit: Livingstone Mukasa

"Speaking about African architecture is a complex undertaking, with an unknown number of conditions and trajectories, some static, others in flux".

The exhibition, A vernacular homage to architecture and design is dedicated to this phenomenon: the social functions and benefits of art in particular regions and how it is represented. It highlights the importance of traditional principles and design, which connects with the notion of sustainability.

Sustainability in art highlights works produced with consideration for the wider impact of the work, and its reception to its social, historical, and cultural environments.

**Q. Does African Architecture have a language, and what is that language?**

A. It is important to stress that Africa was never a collective whole. The continent has always been a global center of exchange, interaction, and movement in constant conversation with other centers of activity both near and far, internal and external. So, the short answer is No.

African Architecture, as a singular definable entity, does not exist. And if it did exist, it certainly wouldn't have a singular language that speaks to it, and of it.

Speaking about African architecture is a complex undertaking, with an unknown number of conditions and trajectories, some static, others in flux. The term African also conjures up various tropes which, when dealing with architecture, can be problematic.

The continent is not homogenous, and every language community produces its means of architectural expression, and it is from these pluralities of social, political, environmental, and cultural contexts that multiple forms of architecture, each unique and distinct, emerge. In that respect, there are many Africa's, with each one being architecturally multi-lingual.



Photo Credit: Isaac Midekessa

**Q. How was the language of Architecture in different African countries developed and why?**

A. There have always been multiple languages, even within each historical era. Some contain parallels amongst them, others are as distinct as one can imagine. They are languages of intuition, of narratives, of community, and within each one, you find further divisible distinctions where layers and textures form the basis of their materiality and where tactile qualities of local materials inform conceptual responses that drive the creative process. In some, you will find rhythm and repetition, seemingly aesthetic but driven by purpose.

Like all spoken languages, they borrow from each other and other external influences, changing and adapting to the times. Some have done so organically, while others were forcibly interrupted and imposed upon. So, in all cases, these architectural languages are complex hybrids, bridging together a series of complementary or even contradictory factors.

The myriad of these African architectural languages has always expressed multiple inter-sectional realities found in the contexts surrounding form, surface, strategy, symbol, and spirituality. They all developed as multi-dimensional spatial responses to diverse conditions ranging from environment, climate, available resources, cultural references, lifestyles, and skillsets.



©Christie's London

**Q. Elements of Mbari art are represented in some of Anne Adams pieces. Tell us about this practice?**

A. Mbari is fascinating because it is one of the remaining forms where African vernacular art and architecture come together, both literally and figuratively. These were essentially ritual complexes of the Owerri Igbo, in Nigeria, where an orchestrated display of often life-size gods, spirits, people, and animals both real and imagined were on display in an elaborate architectural setting.

Typically built of perishable materials like clay, few Mbari artifacts have survived, and fewer still are in Museum collections. The use of clay, particularly termite clay, as the primary material for constructing Mbari is encoded in symbolism. It represents Ala, the central deity of Igbo religion, whose shrine is often located in the vicinity of and incorporates the struggle to absorb or sublimate the rising importance of Amadioha, another deity. This struggle is a part of the ritual process and spatial configuration of Mbari and can be seen in the floor plans of most houses. The simplest plans locate various deities along a cruciform axis while more complex plans relocate in the graphic inscription, the pairing of Ala and Amadioha.

These houses took years to build and were generally left to decay, melting back into the earth after several rains, with new ones being constructed rather than old ones being maintained. This was because the process of building the houses was regarded as a sacred act, and required huge communal investments in time and resources, and completion was celebrated with formal festivals where the finished building and contents were subjected to evaluation and criticism. It exemplifies the fusion of art and architecture, with community ownership of that union in both processes and use.

So Mbari unfolded into a fluid process of art and architecture, whose meanings and importance lie in the performative context of ritual, rather than the constructed edifice. So essentially, Mbari does not produce objects, it produces narratives. Being a largely extinct process, few resources exist, and the symbolism of decay and renewal has been lost. Mbari remains a stellar example of how some African cultures designed their art objects with specific life spans - the life history of creation, use, and dissolution.

**Q. What is the generational practice of vernacular art?**

A. These are typically art forms that historically developed to address a practical purpose, shaped by values and standards passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community, and through demonstration, conversation, and practice. But over time, many of these purposes are lost or forgotten, and in many cases, there is subsequently no further transmission unless the object or action has been imbued with meaning beyond its initial practicality.

Vernacular art is rooted in and reflects the cultural life of a community. It encompasses the body of expressive culture associated with the folklore and cultural heritage of a people. Alongside other types of tangible and intangible art forms, it originally developed to address a real need, shaped by generational values.

One of the things that tend to separate vernacular art from, say, the fine arts, is that they're usually learned through observation and imitation and close one-on-one work with a master artist. These apprenticeships, usually within the family, allows informal learning in a way that makes sense to the communities that hold those traditional art forms. They are intended to incentivize taking time out to make sure that these traditions get passed on, so that the processes don't get lost, encouraging a real commitment to continuity of tradition over generations, ensuring that no matter how many generations later, there always remains a sense of connectivity to their ancestors.

**Q. What are the social functions and benefits of vernacular art?**

A. Traditionally, African art has always been a verb rather than a noun. That is, it has always been primarily functional. Unlike in the Western context where art is created to be viewed and appreciated, the African vernacular artist "shapes" an object to visually express symbolism or a complex set of ideas, and the audience receives that expression. While the formal qualities of artworks make them satisfying visual experiences, that satisfaction plays a secondary role in the actual social or spiritual use of the art piece. The aesthetic quality thus became a by-product of what the piece of art symbolized, and the size, scale, texture, and value become formal elements that contributed to the work's meaning. In that respect, vernacular art, and its creation became a socio-cultural institution, playing important roles in all levels of a community's existence across all spheres of life, from birth to death, in celebration, or mourning.

Photo Credit: Livingstone Mukasa



**Q. How have artists throughout the centuries been inspired by vernacular architecture?**

A. Art and architecture have always had a symbiotic relationship. Vernacular architecture has influenced art and vernacular art has influenced architecture.

Architecture, sculpture, and painting once belonged together, all collectively practiced by the same individuals. There's significant documented evidence of how admirably intertwined they were at various points in history—whether in the ancient cultures of the East, West, and Global South, and the European Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque periods. It is only during relatively recent times in human civilization that the separation of art and architecture has taken place. Vernacular art's influence on architecture is well documented. In the late 1800s, thousands of African sculptures began arriving in European museums in the aftermath of exploratory expeditions and colonial plunder. The aesthetics of these traditional sculptures soon became a powerful and well-documented influence among avant-garde artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. At the time, these artists didn't understand the meaning and functional nature of these sculptures, but they instantly recognized the spiritual aspect of the composition and quickly adapted these qualities to their efforts to move beyond the naturalism that had defined Western art since the Renaissance. African art that was previously labeled and regarded as primitive anchored the modern art movement.

For example, Picasso's predilection for experimentation and drawing inspiration from outside the accepted artistic sources led to his most radical and revolutionary painting in 1907: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907, Museum of Modern Art). His treatment of the painting's theme—the female nude—was considered revolutionary for the times. The figures on the left in the painting look flat as if they have no skeletal or muscular structure. Faces seen from the front have noses in the profile. The eyes are asymmetrical and radically simplified. Contour lines are incomplete. Colour juxtapositions are intentionally strident and unharmonious. The representation of space is fragmented and discontinuous. The representation of African masks, the fragmented planes, the body distortions, the visual incongruities, all were considered revolutionary for the European eye, these compositions were widespread in African art and sculpture. This influence soon transcended into architecture.

Trailblazing European architects like Le Corbusier, one of the founders of modern architecture, and De Stijl pioneer Theo Van Doesburg used well-organized

geometric and cubical forms from African art and West African spatial organization in much of their notable works giving rise to the International Style – then considered unconventional, unprecedented and innovative.

A good example is Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut, in Ronchamp, France. Completed in 1955 this Roman Catholic chapel went on to become one of Le Corbusier's most iconic designs and is often regarded as the first Postmodern building and the first building of the Expressionist architecture movement. Now according to Le Corbusier's writings, it was the hilly site that gave birth to his architectural response, but interestingly enough, he had never done anything quite like this building before. Everything about this building was a radical departure from his previous architectural language. The form of the chapel consists of a sequence of convex and concave surfaces that makes the building look much larger than it is. The curved shape of the building creates external areas which extend the interior of the chapel onto the surroundings. These outdoor spaces are frequently used for open-air religious events, a somewhat curious design intervention for a building in a region without constant year-round temperatures. The monumental, curved concrete roof is a shell structure supported by columns hidden in the walls. A gap underneath allows a sliver of light to filter into the interior. Although its external appearance suggests a complicated layout, the interior is a fairly simple plan. An irregular arrangement of windows is scattered across the walls, with openings slant towards their centers at varying degrees, thus letting in light at different angles.

Although Le Corbusier never explicitly mentioned West Africa, a thorough analysis of his writings and his sketches begins to betray his inspiration claims. In his travels in the decade and a half before this building, particularly in Africa, you begin to see a growing interest in African artistic and sculptural expression.

In its elevations and floor plan, Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut bears striking resemblance to West African architecture, for example with the 1890s Tokolor mosque in Senegal. In both buildings we even see how much of their natural interior light is derived indirectly from openings in light wells/towers, a feature also found in Dogon houses. These West African influences, so visibly present in the Chapel at Ronchamp also lies as much in the tangible forms of Le Corbusier's buildings, but also in the thought processes that informed the conceptualization and design resolution of several of his subsequent projects which from then on, often moved towards somewhat more organic and sinuous shapes.

**Q. You have released Architectural Guide, Sub-Saharan Africa, with 7 volumes, featuring over 850 selected buildings and over 200 thematic articles: As an architect how important was this project for you?**

A. This was a global collaborative effort, consisting of over 300 authors and over 600 total participants that took seven years to come to fruition. This was the first time a cohort of this caliber produces an anthology exclusively on African architecture. As associate editor and co-author, my role was to give voice to the voiceless, raise the levels of the narratives to be more inclusive and not reflect sub-Saharan Africa's architecture solely through the Western gaze, help broaden representation to induce as many diverse opinions as possible, and also broaden the understanding of architecture particularly as it relates to the African context and the relevance that this understanding can have on the discourse of architecture as a whole. This was a huge undertaking, especially on the part of the publisher, DOM Publishers, who remained steadfast in their dedication to this project even as challenges kept mounting.

So beyond merely presenting a survey of important and relevant buildings in each of the region's 49 countries, this publication went much further, with authors critically examining issues like investigating and interrogating the colonial legacies of architecture on the continent, and questions like where can or should contemporary architects draw inspiration from? How does African art, culture, vernacular architecture, or indigenous knowledge systems influence the creation of contemporary space? How is Africa's tangible and intangible heritage handled? And how do all these things manifest themselves in defining African aspirations, both locally and on the world stage, within the built environment? The roles of Africa's large global diaspora were also considered, because African building traditions, much like other aspects of Africa's cultures, were transported across oceans and can now be found in multiple places outside the continent.

Architectural training provides one with a very distinct way of looking at buildings, and the relationships we as species have with the built environment. While I have always been conversant with how this understanding is heavily influenced by Western principles and precedents, the time spent on this publication drove home just how much our continent can inform not just how we build, but why we build as well. And the relevance of this understanding extends far beyond the continent's shores. Much like African art went on to influence Western art, and even form the bedrock of some Western artistic movements, through critical documentations like those in this book, we can now begin to explore how African architecture could do the same if it hasn't done so already, and for Africans, it is yet another resource to help bridge our divides, and through the multiplicities of our architecture, learn more about ourselves and each other.



Architectural Guide Sub-Saharan Africa

© DOM Publishers



Photo Credit: iStock-Murmakowa

# PABLO PICASSO

## SPAIN



© Museum of Modern Art

"For example, Picasso's predilection for experimentation and drawing inspiration from outside the accepted artistic sources led to his most radical and revolutionary painting in 1907: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907, Museum of Modern Art). His treatment of the painting's theme—the female nude—was considered revolutionary for the times."

# LULAMA WOLF MLAMBO

## SOUTH AFRICA

Lulama 'wolf' Mlambo is a 27-year-old visual artist who lives and works in Johannesburg South Africa. In her first year of college at the University of Johannesburg studying fine art and fashion her expressionist and abstract interest asserted itself as she became more involved in her practice.

Being the millennial creative, Mlambo has been exposed and known for different forms of expression through photography and mixed-media digital collages. Although her formal training ended prematurely she is greatly inspired by two fellow artists Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi and Ernest Mancoba (1904 - 2002).

A principal theme in Mlambo's work is space, spirituality, and influences from vernacular architecture. She explores the human condition in extremely imaginative ways creating hyper visualized characters. Curiosity for science in the African context, how the different themes are interlinked, and what roles they play to one another.

Her work at the intersection of neo-expressionism and modern African art, Mlambo interrogates the Pre-colonial African experience through the contemporary mind by using smearing, scraped, and deep pigment techniques that were used in vernacular architecture or the patterns created by mostly women to decorate African homes.

History and proof of life are the core languages in her work where there is little to no reference of life in black spirituality. She uses that narrative by staging her 2D Acrylic paintings to embody the simplicity of the native eye. Her intention is tender and is protective of her imaginary world or rather her symbolic view of how her world looks in an alternate universe. She is set on creating a photographic/graphic experience that morphs and shapeshifts into a 2-dimensional plane or higher.

Mlambo's work has been a subject of group exhibitions worldwide including THK Gallery, Group Exhibition, Cape Town, (2020); Undiscovered Canvas, Group Exhibition, Antibes, (2020); 1-54, Online Group Show, Paris, (2021); Nature of Women, Artshesays, New York, (2021).

"HER INTENTION IS TENDER AND IS PROTECTIVE OF HER IMAGINARY WORLD OR RATHER HER SYMBOLIC VIEW OF HOW HER WORLD LOOKS IN AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE"



Photo Credit: Lulama Wolf Mlambo

# REMAINING

/22

## VERNACULAR



### ARTIST STATEMENT

#### SERIES: REMAINING VERNACULAR

Vernacular Arts & Texture: Remaining Vernacular is a body of work focusing on the textures that make the African people and their homes. A yearning to remember what remains.

The African continent has been through many changes that we have forgotten its DNA. It is a place of strength, dynamic form, and weakness. However, the most valuable blessing is in what has been built and nurtured. Remnants of a people. What they believe, who they are, what they do, and what they represent. The very fiber of Africa's DNA is rooted in the articulation of the communication handed down to its people from those who came before them. Their innate ability to build, nurture and create helps them preserve and simplify the language communicated.

Colour is subjective. The combination of vision and imagination when it comes to colour is imperative for sight. The way Lulama Wolf sees colour in this body of work is taken from how intentional Africans are with colour. She allows the colour room to expand and flow freely. The intentions connect where bold and subtlety collide. These paintings explore colours from the African perspective in nature and natural elements. The colours on the canvas are deliberate. They are mixed intuitively and compliment each other to promote introspection.

Character is a fundamental trait in how people of the continent improve and nurture their feelings. The exhibition solidifies Lulama's exploration of pre-colonial references and merging the ideas into a reimagined future for the continent. She takes these ideas and ideologies and brings them into a world or an image into fantasy and lives in complete harmony in her mind. She explores the ideas of what character is in the DNA of the African people by not emphasizing the actual continent and what it has from a natural resources point of view but using the actual

resources to apply to her work, which emphasizes the character of the African people.

The figures in her work represent an emotion that is related and linked to the history of how they operate or how she sees them as an operation. The people themselves are what make the continent. The people themselves are what build the continent and can ultimately rebuild from what they know. In essence, when exploring vernacular art and texture she has taken a selection of works that symbolize the characters of the people she can represent from pre-colonial activity. These faces are unrecognizable, they are geometric in their essence, however, the spirit that she wants them to carry is of a different personality and allows people to accept each other as different. To allow that to be character traits that African's can accept and celebrate.

The larger paintings included in the body of work outside of the character explore and expand on what character is from a liberated point of view. Lulama solidifies her themes such as formlessness, remembering, resting, allowing herself to remain open to the knowledge of what happened in the past. These links draw us back to what vernacular art and textures are and still go back into the basic structure of what it is or what it means to create. She touches on figure drawing and rock art, contrasting colours that represent natural elements and resources.

She uses sand as an extending medium in her signature style and movement. One thing Lulama focuses on when creating a colour palette is a relation to giving colour the freedom to move in the space which the canvas provides. It is allowing minimalism and maximalism to coexist in a way that can easily evoke a feeling that is linked to the body of work. Character is another layer to what texture is and it is not linear. The people make the texture.

Hieroglyphic	Hieroglyphic Book Hand
ca. 1500 B.C.	ca. 1500 B.C.
ca. 1900	

Photo Credit: Lulama Wolf Mlambo



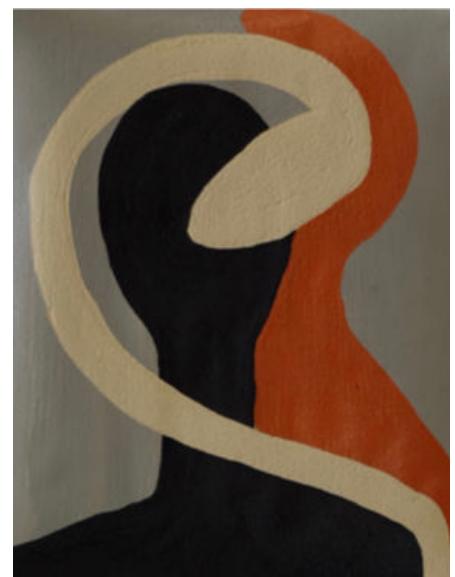
**SERIES:**

**BANA BA MA'AM ZIMA I-VII I  
MA'AM ZIMAS CHILDREN I-VII**

Acrylic and sand on canvas

39 x 30 cm

2021





**BANA BA MA'AM ZIMA VIII-X I  
MA'AM ZIMAS CHILDREN VIII-X**

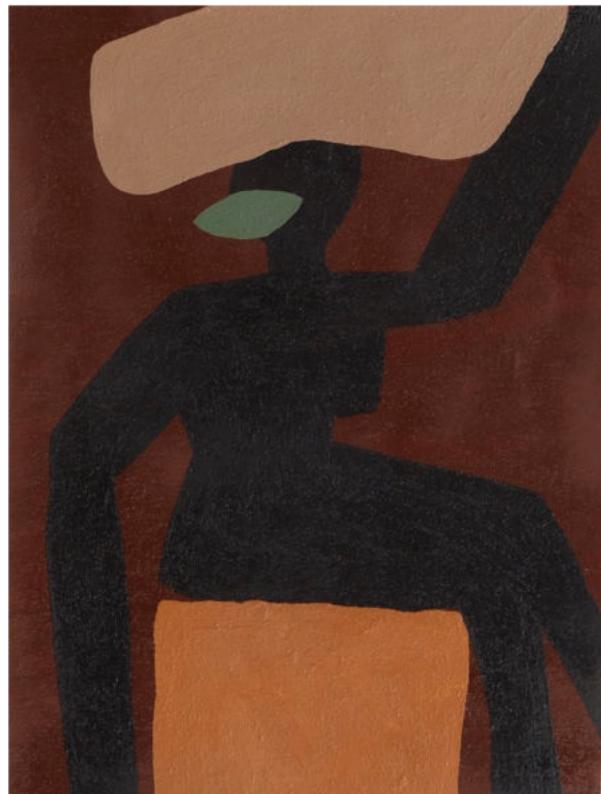
Acrylic and sand on canvas

39 x 30 cm

2021

### **SECLUDED (I)**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
39 x 30 cm  
2021



### **SECLUDED (II)**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
39 x 30 cm  
2021

**ABO SISI BENDAWO I**  
**THE GIRLS OF THE MOMENT**

Acrylic and sand on canvas

155 x 160 cm

2021



**HIS STRENGTH IS PERFECT IN  
HIS WEAKNESS**

Acrylic and sand on canvas

130 x 160 cm

2021



**AS THINGS CHANGE, THEY  
REMAIN**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
109 x 160 cm  
2021

**SIYAKHULISANA (I) I  
WE ARE RAISING EACH  
OTHER**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
100 x 100 cm  
2021



**SIYAKHULISANA (II) | WE ARE RAISING EACH OTHER**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
100 x 100 cm  
2021



**SIYAKHULISANA (III) | WE ARE RAISING EACH OTHER**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
100 x 100 cm  
2021



**FUDUMALA I BE WARM**

Acrylic and sand on linen

160 x 105 cm

2021

**PARADE/PARADE  
/PARADE**

Acrylic and sand on  
canvas

157 x 157 cm

2021





**PUISANO LE PELO YA HAO I  
TALKS WITH YOUR HEART**  
Acrylic and sand on raw canvas  
153 x 100 cm  
2021

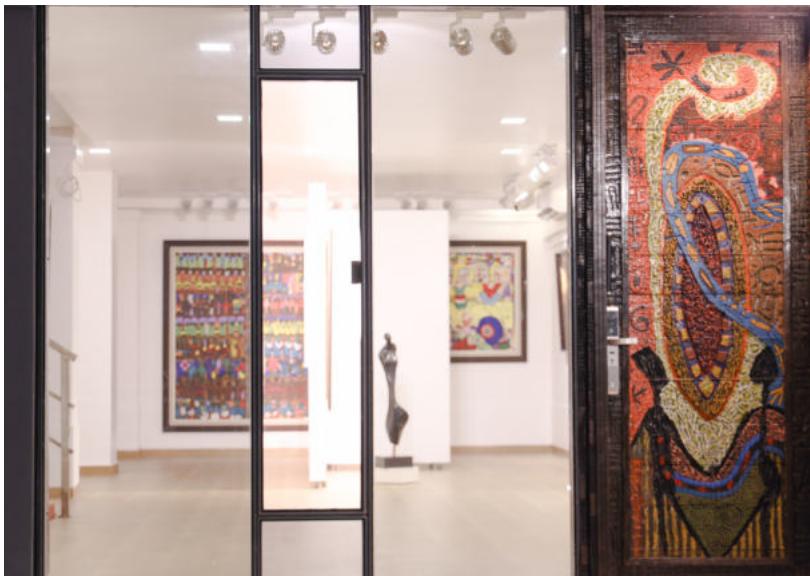
**NO ONE SEES MORE  
LOOK UP**

Acrylic and sand on canvas  
163 x 105 cm  
2021



# COLLABORATORS

## AFFINITY ART GALLERY X UNDISCOVERED CANVAS



A Vernacular Homage to Architecture & Design is a collaborative endeavor between Affinity Art Gallery and Undiscovered Canvas. The founders of both companies are themselves art professionals who have identified a unique opportunity for cross-cultural and cross-border collaboration between Nigeria, South Africa, and France. By coming together to properly represent, empower and highlight the contribution of women to society, Affinity Art gallery and Undiscovered Canvas are carving a new narrative honoring the legacy of African women artists.

This collaboration aims to unify, uphold and celebrate the history, culture, and traditions of Africa. The artists embark on an artistic storytelling journey with mediums such as ceramics, paintings, and video, using their artistic expression and contemporary lens to transmit information passed down through generations by our African matriarchy.

Nomaza Nongqunga Coupez, the founder of Undiscovered canvas, is a former cultural liaison to French President Emmanuel Macron. She believes that creative industries can drive the economy of countries, by creating wealth, innovation, and competitiveness. As a result, she subsequently started the first artist residency dedicated to African artists on the French Riviera. Undiscovered Canvas headhunts the best talents from Africa and promotes African Creative Industries in Europe and Africa, through identifying markets and building events that showcase the best of African creatives.



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A VERNACULAR HOMAGE TO ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

Anne Adams  
Lulama 'Wolf' Mlambo  
Curated by Naomi Edobor  
31 July 2021 - 28 August 2021

Affinity Art Gallery & Undiscovered Canvas

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Unit 2, 1-7 Muri Okunola Street, Victoria Island  
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Affinity Art Gallery is opened  
Tuesday through Saturday,  
11 am - 6 pm  
Sunday by appointment only.

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4/30

SIYAKHULISANA (I) |  
WE ARE RAISING  
EACH OTHER

AAG affinity  
art gallery