

LIVE



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**URBAN CROSS
SERIES 2**

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The supremacy
of God

Love always finds
its way home

Shape your dreams

2

PRELUDE



As Live is set to release a new collection, the URBAN CROSS SERIES 2, I get the invitation to come to witness the process, the behind the scenes, and candidness of making art in Abuja. It's a rare opportunity and I'm glad to join the collaboration.

**STREAM YOUR
CONSCIOUSNESS**

Since the designer, Daniel Jindu Dimuna, confided his designs in me long ago, I'd been waiting to see its eventual unveiling. He informs me of the other creatives he's employed on the journey including Ayo Aina, Eduvie, Earl of Abuja and so many more. For me, he designates the role of the chronicler.

This, what you have now — I'm reluctant to call it a magazine cause it seems insufficient — is the road to Urban Cross Series 2. It's an exploration of the 3 themes on which the designer has grounded his latest collection: 'Shape Your Dreams', 'Love Always Finds It's Way Home' and 'The Supremacy of God.'

He expresses this by digging into his roots and culture and employing the ancient Nsibidi script for his designs.

Deftly placed on a red background, Jindu, who believes humans are art and also canvasses for art, emblazons these themes in his museum piece fashion statements. His team of photographers is each given a theme and given the freedom to express themselves. This comes off the success of the Urban Cross Series 1 where the concept of duality was the focus.

Jindu returns again and takes a bold step further in his ultimate quest. As you delve into these pages, know that you're now part of this journey. The quest is yours as well, the duty, the yearning: Stream Your Consciousness. Always.

— Amadin Ogbewe, Editor.



THE SUPREMACY OF GOD

by Emmanuel Divine

Keren-Happuch Odinenu

Rotimi Shittu







“Real recognize real,” he says to me, a self-satisfied smile on his face.























It makes sense, Earl's need for little or no words.

I get the message. Even better, I feel it. And when an artist makes you feel, they've done their job.



“My bro. All this na much reading,” is Earl’s reply when he’s sent the questions via text. Here’s another man with a subtle disdain for the written word.

I’m unable to meet him physically for a chat hence the need to resort to Beyoncé’s internet. Unlike Ayo’s air of mystery, Earl seems to be a nitty-gritty practical type of guy. He doesn’t see the need for a lot of words cause he’s never needed them.

Hand this man a camera and target and the job is done. No long talk. Not too much reading. His voice is quite deeper than I expect. It’s especially noteworthy because — perhaps I’m grasping at straws — it sounds Godly.

I suspect Earl’s really just a busy man. An embodiment of the traditional rapper over beaten if-we-not-talking-money-then-we-not-talking trope. He however takes out the time for his friend and frequent collaborator, the designer, Jindu.

I remember the designer’s words about the rising star. “Earl of Abuja,” he calls him. “My guy’s a celebrity now bro,” he adds again with the glowing pride he’s had for all his collaborators. This is a man who’s happy to see his peers growing like he is. It’s a very key aspect in the Live culture I hope continues to thrive.

Living up to his celebrity status, Earl’s muse for the shoot is none other than the talented Keren. The singer who seems to model but only for Jindu (a totally boss move by the way. Sort of like Kanye West employing Beyoncé’s mega-ness in the form of a backup singer once upon a time). Keren is yet another long-time friend of Jindu

and it starts to amaze me how much one man can attract so many top tier creatives.

“Real recognize real,” he says to me, a self-satisfied smile on his face.

I recall his texts to me just after he returned from Earl’s shoot. It accurately depicts what I’m able to glean from the monumental photos he sends me.

In Jindu’s words:

“I remember yesterday as we slowly drove through this vast body of water on this elevated rock path, Keren immediately felt something and said she’s a water sign and if your will is strong enough, you can feel the energy of the water and resist the urge to go to it. Lol, she immediately got spiritual with it. I remember when we were on set and the sun started to affect Keren and Earl said, bro, this shows the universe is on our side: yesterday it rained all day and we begged for the sun to be on us today, there’s no way we’re failing, God is with us. To our left, there’s just a vast space of green and to our right, there’s a lot of water. Chibueze seemed to be scared of the water at first but later on, he started to stand at the edge close to the water, almost proving Keren’s spirit theory right. That the water can call to you.

There’s this moment she starts to play her *ubaka* and starts to sing to an original song of hers. For a moment, it almost felt like her music transported us to Japan cause of her outfit and the sound of the instrument. It felt like a real urban cross moment right there. Then she brought us back to Nigeria when she started to sing to Rema’s bad boy.

Rotimi, on the other hand (the male rookie), was hard to work with, cause it was his first experience and maybe he felt tense with Keren's overwhelming *chakra*, but there were brief moments of excellence with him, at a point he screamed at her: "Keren, come now o! I'm in my best moment right now." And during his set, he said, "my sister is a photographer and a lot of people have told me to go into modeling but it's a bit hard for me, but after this experience, I think I'll give it a shot."

That right there felt like an awakening for me. In a way, our little journey was where he felt God's supremacy in opening this new path for him. We hope to see more of him cause that body is wasting."

I think it's pretty clear how much of a dreamer and cheerleader the bespectacled designer is. All I feel, however, is an annoyance at him cause I just have to blame someone for missing such an experience. The proximity to nature where you glimpse God's eye. The stillness of those waters and it's beckoning. The chance to witness Keren live in her element. But my pain is not long felt, for when I gaze upon the finished product, I do feel these things. I experience them through the images.

What was your theme?

The Supremacy of God.

Did you choose your theme?

No, not really. The designer and I sat down and spoke about it and

he wanted me to do something minimal that isn't really out there so I felt let's do this one.

How did you end up interpreting your theme?

I for one love having peace of mind, it's quite dear to me and the way I see it, the supreme being is high up there and when you're high up there, you have peace of mind.

Did that choice affect your location pick?

Yes, it did cause we now had to look for somewhere where there's not too many things to distract us from the clothes and with a lot of natural elements.

I remember you've said you'll like to own a property there one day, is that an idea that's still in your head or . . . ?

Definitely yes, there's nothing as calming as having peace of mind. It's so peaceful compared to what we have in the city centers, you know? It's not every day you wake up to birds singing and animals around and it's easy to love yourself in that scenario. I feel people take that for granted especially with how this country and economy is, it's easy to lose sight of what's important so we need to remove distractions from us. They say the mind can move mountains so man gats stay close to the mountains.

If you had to pick another theme, which one would you pick?

I definitely wouldn't have done love though. Probably shape your dreams.

What specific challenges have you faced with the designer?

He's a great person and we're cool but if there's any challenges, it's funding for materials to carry out certain things, rentals, and things like that. It's not easy out here.

Do you remember when you first met Jindu?

It was at a stadium where I was shooting his friend and I saw him and he was wearing some funny looking sandals and I'm like, who be this guy? And at that time I didn't think we would be doing a project of this scale in the near future.

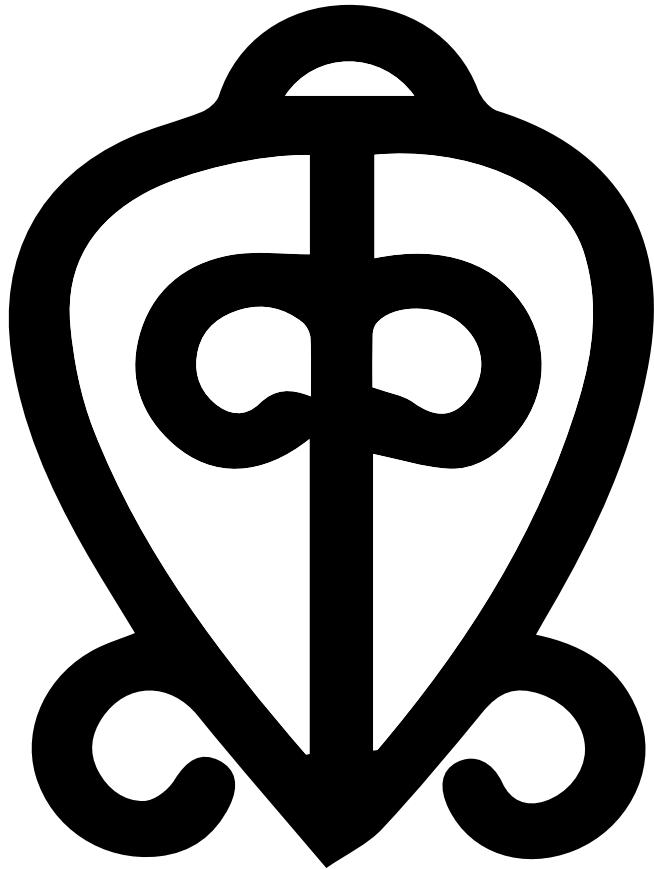
Tell us about yourself.

I don't think there's much to say but I like to be honest so if anyone wants to be close to me, you have to be honest and be real. Don't pretend around me, please. That's the only way of life.

What about the Abuja art scene?

This is the longest I've spent in this town cause of the pandemic, usually travel a lot. But I've noticed a lot of people are coming in to the scene but a lot of people are trying out short cuts and that's not the way and there's this question that keeps coming up about who you've worked with before they give you a chance. I think it's messed up, and that's where Live is different, the designer doesn't really care about that, he believes in giving people equal chances and opportunities cause you never know where the magic is.

Perhaps, it's a bit more than real recognizing real as Jindu says. On some level I know he believes a Higher power is at work here. I know he believes the supremacy of God guides his designs. Perhaps he is right.



LOVE ALWAYS FINDS ITS WAY HOME

by Eduvie Udusegbe

Kamdi Eze

Zulu Eze

Sharon Ogbiti

Charles Toriola









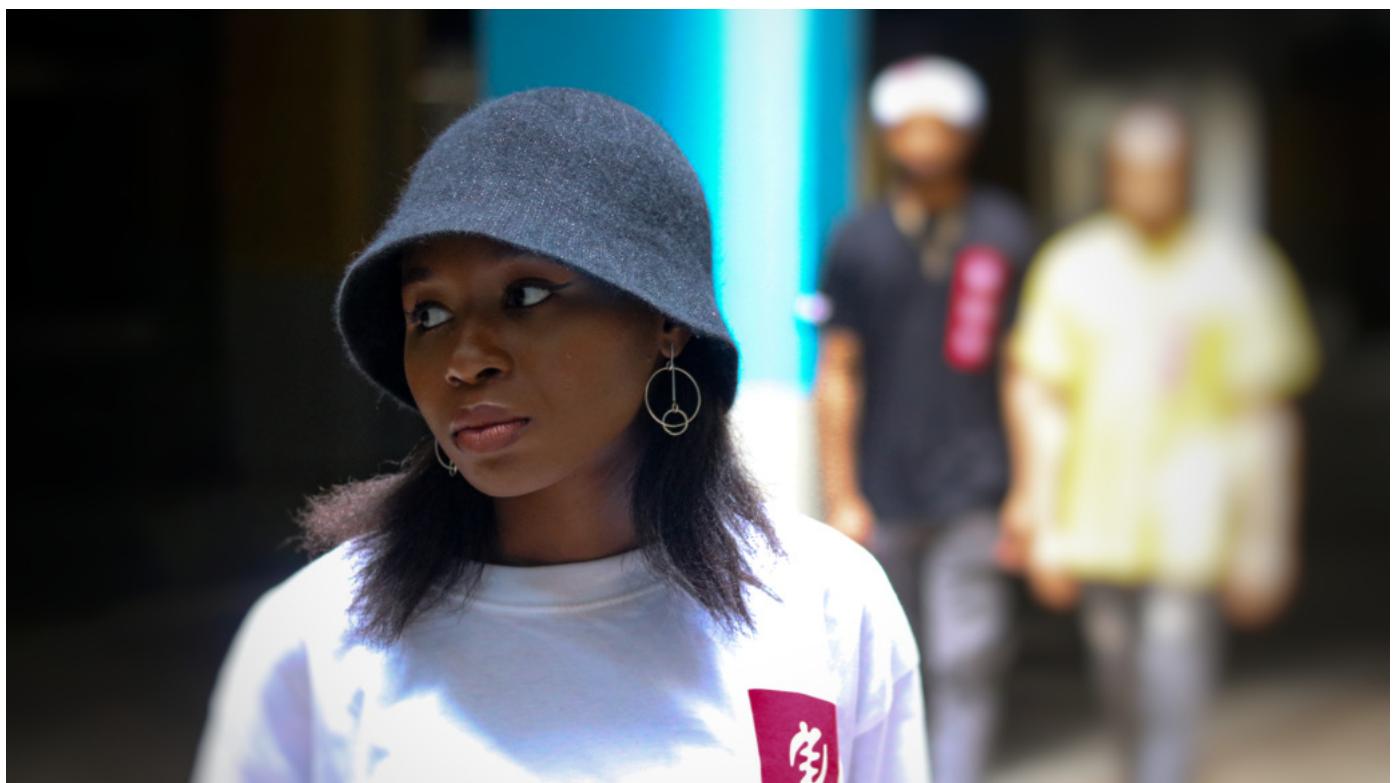


*“Alexa, play me Everybody
Wants to Rule the World
by Tears for Fear.”*

Music starts to blast from the speaker. This vibe they speak of seems to be infectious. Everyone's nodding as the shoot goes on.



The sounds really do change the mood and I feel like the pictures will show the music.











The sun is setting as I stand on the stairs outside the suya spot with Eduvie, my iPhone stretched between us to record his sage words.

“Yes. Yes. I am Jean Croix croissant,” he says stroking his moustache, a fashionable scarf draped around his head, one foot on a level of the stairs and the other on another.

I am transported to Paris. I’ve never been but I suspect moustached young men who speak of croissants at sunsets on stairs is commonplace in the beautiful city, no?

I reply to Eduvie in unintelligible French of my own, causing sniggers from our small audience of Jindu, Sharon, and Toriola who have just finished modeling for Mr. Croissant’s photoshoot.

I recall how we’d rendezvoused as usual at Jindu’s place hours ago.

Like before, I find myself the first to arrive. While we await our models, I can sense Jindu’s excitement. As the makeshift father of this collaboration, I can’t help but wonder if he actually has a favorite.

“You’re really excited about this shoot,” I say.

“Very much man. Eduvie’s going to cause an upset. I believe in him.”

The designer’s emotion is understandable when you realize Eduvie, who was a model for Live’s very first issue as a teen, is now in charge of a shoot of his own. He stands side by side with Ayo Aina, who’s in charge of another theme and the same person who

photographed the debut Live shoot years ago. It's a coming of age story.

I recall a tweet of Jindu's some weeks ago asking me to take care of this young creative whom he dubbed his heir.

As we speak of the devil, he drives in and parks quite unconventionally.

"This Eduvie is a rogue," Jindu chides him as he comes down from the car.

He walks slowly to us as if taking note of each step. One of his models is finding it hard to locate the place, he tells us. Soon he walks off to go bring the lost model to the house.

After narrating a funny experience about the cab driver seemingly taking the young man on a merry go round, we set off to the location, or one of the locations I'm told.

"You're supposed to interview me, right? I'm not really in a proper mental state now. Maybe later," Eduvie says, flustered after rescuing his friend. I get the sense he wants everything to be just right.

First, we make a stop to pick up another model. Sharon, who's hyper from the word 'go', hops into the car all glammed up and ready to dazzle. It's interesting that her makeup is done by Livia, another pioneer model for Live. And Sharon's elder sister, Ruby? Yet another pioneer collaborator. This is a close-knit family, always ready to pass the torch.

I suddenly notice how young they are. I mean everyone's young but other than Jindu and myself, these kids seem to be bright Gen Z's, the type that has compound sentences for dates of births.

This is evidenced when Jindu and I start talking about someone I can only refer to as a legend, the great Terry G, to Sharon's utter bemusement.

"Who's Terry G?" The sweet summer child asks.

Her face screws up as the "arikpatapatapscalpcklavkackack" blasts out of Jindu's phone. She does not recognize the hit song 'Free Madness.'

Jindu says to her: "Terry G was Rema before Rema was Rema, you hear?"

While we pick up two more models, I can sense this youthful exuberance enveloping us unlike the ride with Ayo who's a stone-cold professional who was all set for the job. The excitement then was one of expectation for what the magician would pull out of the hat. This time it's the juvenile idea that anything can happen. It's refreshing.

We get to the first location. Somewhere in Maitama. Right next to us is an unfinished house on a hill.

"Let's shoot there!" I say along with Sharon.

"Please, I cannot explain to anyone's parents o," Jindu says.

Eduvie takes two of the male models aside and they discuss for a while. They're the only two needed for the first location. A wide boulevard with some trees and a mountain in the distance.

As we gist about anime and other such things, we notice Eduvie and the boys getting smaller and smaller as they continue into the distance.

We lose sight of them after a while.

“Where have they gone?” I ask.

“I don’t know o,” Jindu responds.

We spend the next couple of moments pondering where the boys have disappeared to and for someone who has no explanations for inquisitive parents, Jindu doesn’t seem all too bothered by their absence. His body language seems to say: “My boy’s got this.”

His body language also says: “I think I’m cool,” evident in how he poses as he hands me his phone to take some shots of him he wasn’t ‘expecting’.

The boys return with nary an explanation about their excursion. Eduvie says he’s done with the first phase and shows off some pictures to Jindu. He mutters some words to him as if seeking counsel and all the designer has for him are words of affirmation like a mother bird shooing its little ones out of the nest so they can soar.

The next location is an underground parking lot. A chic setting and a great allure for a key demographic Live seeks to attract.

I instantly perceive the souls of hip hop music videos that rest beneath the concrete floors. It's Sharon's turn in the spotlight and she's all too ready.

"Okay, we need music. Someone connect to my Bluetooth," Eduvie says.

"Yes!" Sharon concurs.

"Will the music show in the pictures?" Jindu asks, rolling his eyes.

"Dude, it's the vibes. Create a vibe. Trust it." Eduvie says as he directs the model on how to pose with the steering wheel.

After some expert shots, we head off to the final location, a playground. The choice and variety of locations don't make sense to me but I hold on to my questions.

We happen to find children on the children's playground. Funny, right?

There's loads of space however to carry out the shoot which features all four models this time around. The group of youngsters invades the space for their joint shots.

The openness of the playground and the young models is a free image and is the polar opposite of Ayo's shoot which was shrouded in mystery. Both approaches are strong in their ideals.

As we're about to leave, Sharon suddenly climbs one of the domes and hangs from it upside down.

There's about 10 seconds of blank stares and exchanged looks between the rest of us that seems to say: "wuzzgoingonhere?"

Sharon, however, maintains her pose and soon Eduvie is taking photos of her from different angles to capture the rare and unexpected moment.

"Did you get it?" She asks as she returns to earth and demands ice cream from the designer.

After getting Sharon's ice cream, the rest of the boys settle on suya and that's how we end up on the stairs at sunset.

What's your theme?

"My theme is 'Love always finds its way home'."

Eduvie speaks slowly as if measuring every word like he's done all day.

Did you pick your theme?

Actually, no. It was offered to me by Jindu and I accepted.

How did you interpret your theme?

Well, I chose a different approach. I did not want to use the stock Pinterest idea of love which is couples looking into the sunset. Rather I went with something everybody can relate to, which is friendship. Speaking of love finding its way back home, I chose the idea of a group of childhood friends who've lost touch but reconnect by using the symbol for the theme to trace their way back to an old playground of theirs. Obviously, the bond that exists between the friends is love and the home is the playground. It also depicts that home isn't a physical place but a place with shared memories.

How did you translate these ideas to the specific locations you used?

We used three locations. The first was Maitama. The streets of Maitama. I chose them because of their broadness. As a child, everything was big to me so I needed a broad street to illustrate that.

The next location was the underground parking lot cause I didn't really want to use the regular open mall parking lots. It was a pretty simple location.

And the playground which is their reunion. They meet up on the slides and the merry go rounds and it's the love that's brought them back together.

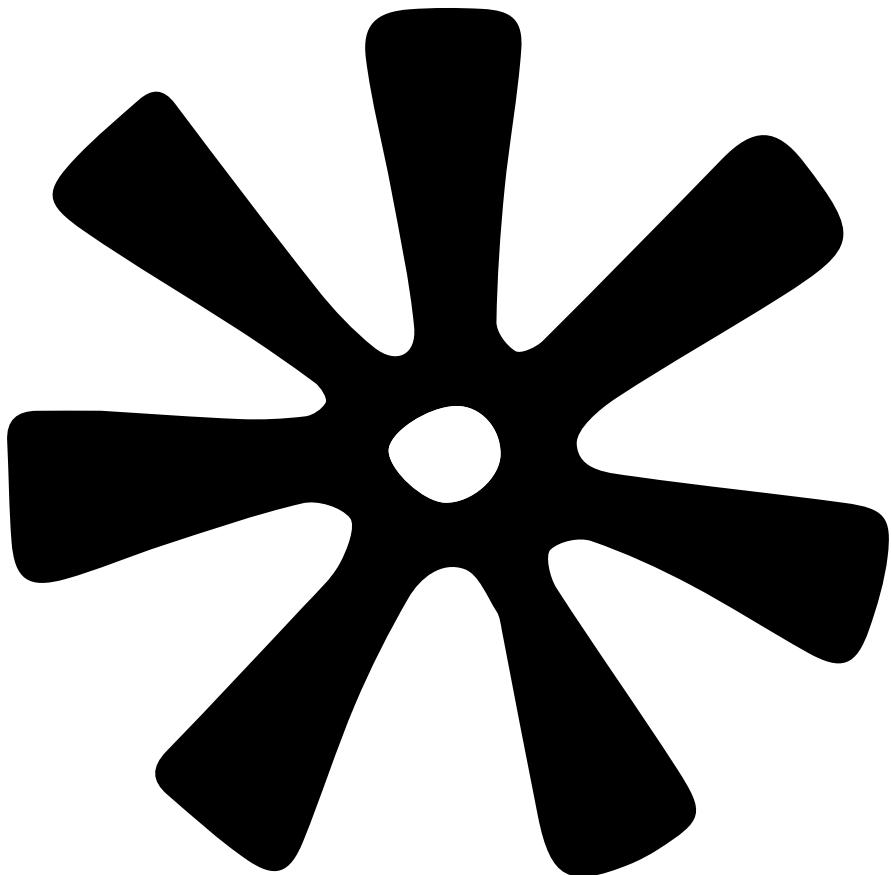
What's the journey to the shoot been like? Preparations and all.

I had a lot bigger planned but things didn't really work out. So I came up with the new route and Daniel helped me modify it to what you see now.

Care to say anything about yourself or your art for your millions of fans?

First of all, I believe everyone is an artist in their own way and I just happened to stumble upon the right people who showed me how art can be interpreted. Ayo actually taught me a lot about this and even though I don't plan to make this a career, I still value art a lot and the whole concept of illustrating whatever you want to say through any means including photography, painting, and so on. I don't really have much to say for myself as an artist but as an individual, art really resonates with me on a different level, especially music.

I turn off the recorder while noting that he's done exactly as he said, made the theme relatable. As for his seemingly imminent retirement, one can only hope the love for the art keeps him glued and takes him back home. To more art.



SHAPE YOUR DREAMS

by Ayokanmi Aina

Mishelle Nnamani





















“At your door,” I text Live’s designer, Jindu.

His house, a place the name ‘home’ was coined for, is silent. Waiting, he meets me outside and informs me that I’m the only one there. A turn of events where I escape the tardy title. Alas, I’m the first one at the venue of convening.

Jindu, who’s often aloof with attires, gets ready in seconds and I begin to question his input in this collaborative effort. Does he plan to be a model for his own designs on this day?

He laughs it off. He’s been eating well and enjoying life adequately despite the COVID-induced planetary pause. He thanks his Maker for clear skin and good vibes.

We speak of happenings, gist, and football as we await the collaborators. Jindu thinks Lionel Messi is God’s gift to football and I’m geared to argue for the sake of it when the model, Mishelle, texts that she’s close but needs guidance to the specific house.

We set off under light rain to the corner basketball court to walk the muse back home. Mishelle, who made a grand statement in the last Live exhibition in 2019, is ‘taller’ than Jindu remembers. She avails that she actually hasn’t grown since. Not physically at least. She seems bigger than before because she is.

Since the last exhibition, she’s gone ahead to explore and develop more range. It’s a recurring motif associated with the Live culture. The growth of its collaborators across different collections is always an aphrodisiac for the next piece of art they release together. These

artists level up with each edition. I wonder what's in store this time around.

With Mishelle and Jindu together at the house, we await the next infinity stone. Soon the young designer starts to fret. The photographer, Ayo, is running late.

"The person in charge of the location says he'll be leaving soon. We'll have to abandon it if Ayo doesn't show up ASAP," he says staring at nothing.

Anyone who's familiar with the designer knows he's one for the contingencies. Batman's doppelgänger through and through. He's already working out an alternate location. His mood brightens as the wait grows . . . the presence of the pretty girl aids this as much as the arrival of a friend, Chibueze, who comes with a spare camera for the absent photographer.

More discussions about life, happenings, Trump, and Nigeria. And then Ayo finally shows up. He apologizes for his tardiness as his cab driver seems to have got him lost repeatedly. We all hop in Chibueze's car as the 4-stars rated cab driver careens off and we head to the location of the shoot.

I recall the last time I met Ayo. He'd been deciding on his choice of models for this shoot right after finishing up another shoot.

"One model?" Jindu, who seemed to think Ayo would need a whole host of models and dramatic settings, had replied aghast at the photographer's final choice.

“Yes, one will be just fine.” Ayo had said offhandedly, his mind already occupied with bringing his vision to life.

“Okay o.”

The exchange says a lot about the relationship between this duo. There’s trust here. Childhood friends, Jindu and Ayo are joining forces yet again after several collaborations including the first-ever shoot for Live.

On the way to the location, I try to coax some of Ayo’s vision for the shoot out of him. He’s equal parts conversational and reserved.

What’s your theme?

“Errrm, Jindu, what’s my theme again?”

The expert shooter asks as if jeered out of some day-dreaming or perhaps more envisioning.

“Dreams? Shape your dreams. Yes.” He says smiling.

Ayo’s a professional. His reputation precedes him. His bearing easily expresses how much he’s in control. He’s relaxed. Unbothered. I realize he’s probably not too arsed about the theme, which is a rather important aspect of the journey, because he’s internalized it already.

It made me wonder. If we had both walked into an examination hall with that singular question. “What is the theme?”

I'd happily scribble "Shape your dreams" with a flourish whereas I suspect Mr. Aina would paint a picture or take a photo.

It's like Kanye says, "I think words are one of our lowest forms of communication."

I completely disagree but I understand absolutely . . . if that makes any sense.

Why did you pick that theme of the three?

"Well, I was offered the theme. It sort of chose me."

How did you interpret the theme of shape your dreams?

"My work has always been about psychology and perception. That's the lens through which I operate."

This one really seems to have little respect for words. Even for a writer like myself, it's oddly refreshing.

How do you want to bring the theme to life?

"It's about shaping your dreams. I want to let the audience see that. A little bit of mystery and flair but not too much which is why one model was all I needed. I don't need to do a lot to get the idea across. I mean to be minimal and let the theme speak for itself."

So you're asking questions, not answering them?

"Exactly."

He's here to show, he doesn't want to tell.

Before long we're at the location and a couple of things go wrong. Apparently, the spare camera, which really was to be the main one, is absent. Chibueze seems to have forgotten it and appeared with the lenses alone. The camera connoisseurs know automatically that it will not work with Ayo's camera without some kind of extension.

I suggest holding the lens just in front of the camera by hand. The exasperated looks I get seem to say: "Stick to writing, you're not a comedian."

Ayo shrugs off the hiccup as he says he requested the camera just to have another option, he actually has all he needs.

Next, the props and location are set up and the model gets into the Live gear. Ayo directs lightly as he's invested in a conversation about art in Abuja with David, the one who's given us access to the location and appears on the cover of the magazine.

I shamelessly eavesdrop on their conversation and it doesn't take much to glean that being a creative in the capital city is not easy and quite expensive.

Soon the shoot begins in earnest. Ayo's instructions are very short and direct. He knows exactly how he wants this to go and, like a puppet master, he pulls all the necessary strings.

All through the shoot, we talk and laugh and take behind the scenes shots and videos, hopping in when Ayo specifically requests for

something. Mishelle is a natural. The camera loves her. I think I do too when she smiles spontaneously.

Ayo takes as many poses as she does, getting the right shots. When he's done with the first phase, he makes a weird request.

"Go put the shirt on backward," he says to her.

Pause.

And then whooping.

What does the genius have in mind?

At some point, someone tries to adjust the red backdrop and it sort of falls on them, draping around them like a robe.

Just then Jindu says, "Stay that way."

This person is then masked and the next phase of shooting begins with the impromptu, and rather mysterious, model.

During breaks, Ayo can be seen staring out the window at nothing. He's animated when he talks about movies and films but phases out when the topic shifts to football. He doesn't seem to be a fan.

I capture one of these moments with my phone. Perhaps this is how I start my own photography career.

The shoot rounds up successfully with enough shots from different eyeholes. On the journey back, I try to get more out of the man of few words.

Did you get what you wanted?

“Yes. Yes I did.”

This was the interpretation you had in mind?

“Yes, but something I particularly like about shoots also happened. The unexpected. How we ended up having a little bit more to add due to chance events. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Other than a slight near-death experience with some road rage, we all get to Jindu’s safely. Ayo takes another cab home and I honestly hope he makes it there.

Perhaps I will call after writing this.

In any case, I can see Live’s dreams taking shape.

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