

CULTURE BEYOND THE MAINSTREAM

VOL.1

# ALTERNATIVE CULTURE



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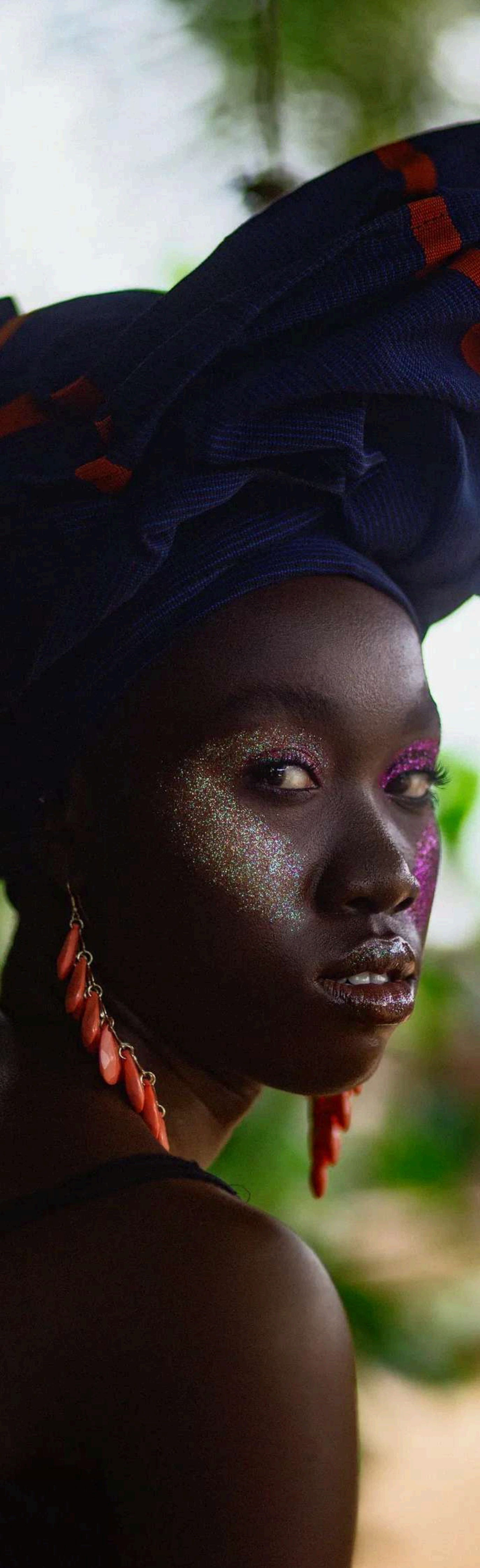
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Abayomi SHOGBADE  
Artist

Alternative Culture Magazine is an open-access, annual, and editorially curated magazine dedicated to exploring the diversity of global alternative cultures. The magazine highlights how culture is shaped, challenged, and redefined through art, creativity, and unconventional forms of expression across societies.

Rather than focusing solely on medium or form, Alternative Culture examines art within its broader social, cultural, political, and market contexts. It recognizes that visual and creative practices do not exist in isolation, but emerge from lived experiences, subcultures, ideologies, trends, and technological shifts. Through this lens, the magazine presents multiple forms of visual expression and perception shaped by media, environment, and the spirit of the time.

The publication explores how images, sounds, and narratives reflect cultural change and influence collective identity. Emphasis is placed not only on artistic production itself, but on its impact, reception, and reciprocal relationship with culture. From underground movements to contemporary digital spaces, the magazine documents how alternative voices communicate meaning beyond mainstream representation.

Alternative Culture engages with a wide range of creative and cultural practices, including film, television, music, performance, fashion, digital arts, media culture, visual technologies, video games, photography, design, architecture, literature, dance, and experimental art forms. These disciplines are discussed in terms of their visual significance, narrative power, and interaction with sound, movement, and everyday social experiences.

The magazine also addresses the role of images and sound as tools of communication, shaped by ideology, innovation, and cultural function. By examining creative industries, digital technologies, broadcasting, motion pictures, and sound recording, Alternative Culture investigates how alternative aesthetics and cultural production influence knowledge, identity, and social awareness.

Ultimately, Alternative Culture views art and aesthetic experience as transformative forces capable of reshaping perception, imagination, and human understanding. Through critical reflection and cultural documentation, the magazine seeks to illuminate the evolving meanings of art and its role in shaping contemporary alternative culture worldwide.





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Artist





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Artist



# Rethinking Spiritual Architecture, Development, and Civilisation in Africa

Across Africa, sacred sites and ancestral shrines continue to exist quietly within villages, towns, forests, courtyards, and family compounds. Many of these shrines are modest in size, sometimes no more than a small structure of clay, wood, stone, or earth. To the untrained or biased eye, this physical modesty has often been misinterpreted as a sign of underdevelopment, primitiveness, or spiritual inferiority when compared to the grand cathedrals, basilicas, and monumental religious architecture of Europe. This interpretation is not only inaccurate, it fundamentally misunderstands African spirituality, African cosmology, and African conceptions of the divine.

The difference between African sacred spaces and European religious monuments is not a question of capacity, intelligence, or technological limitation. It is a difference rooted in worldview. In many African spiritual systems, ancestral worship is central. Ancestors are not abstract, distant, or omnipotent gods removed from human experience.

They are people who once lived, walked the earth, built families, farmed land, fought wars, told stories, and died.

They are remembered not as supreme beings demanding awe through architectural dominance, but

as elders whose presence continues through lineage, land, memory, , and ritual.

Because ancestors are buried in the earth, African shrines often emerge from the ground itself. The earth is not merely a physical surface; it is sacred, alive, and ancestral. A small shrine, low to the ground, is therefore not a sign of spiritual weakness but a deliberate symbolic choice that reflects proximity, intimacy, and continuity between the living and the dead.



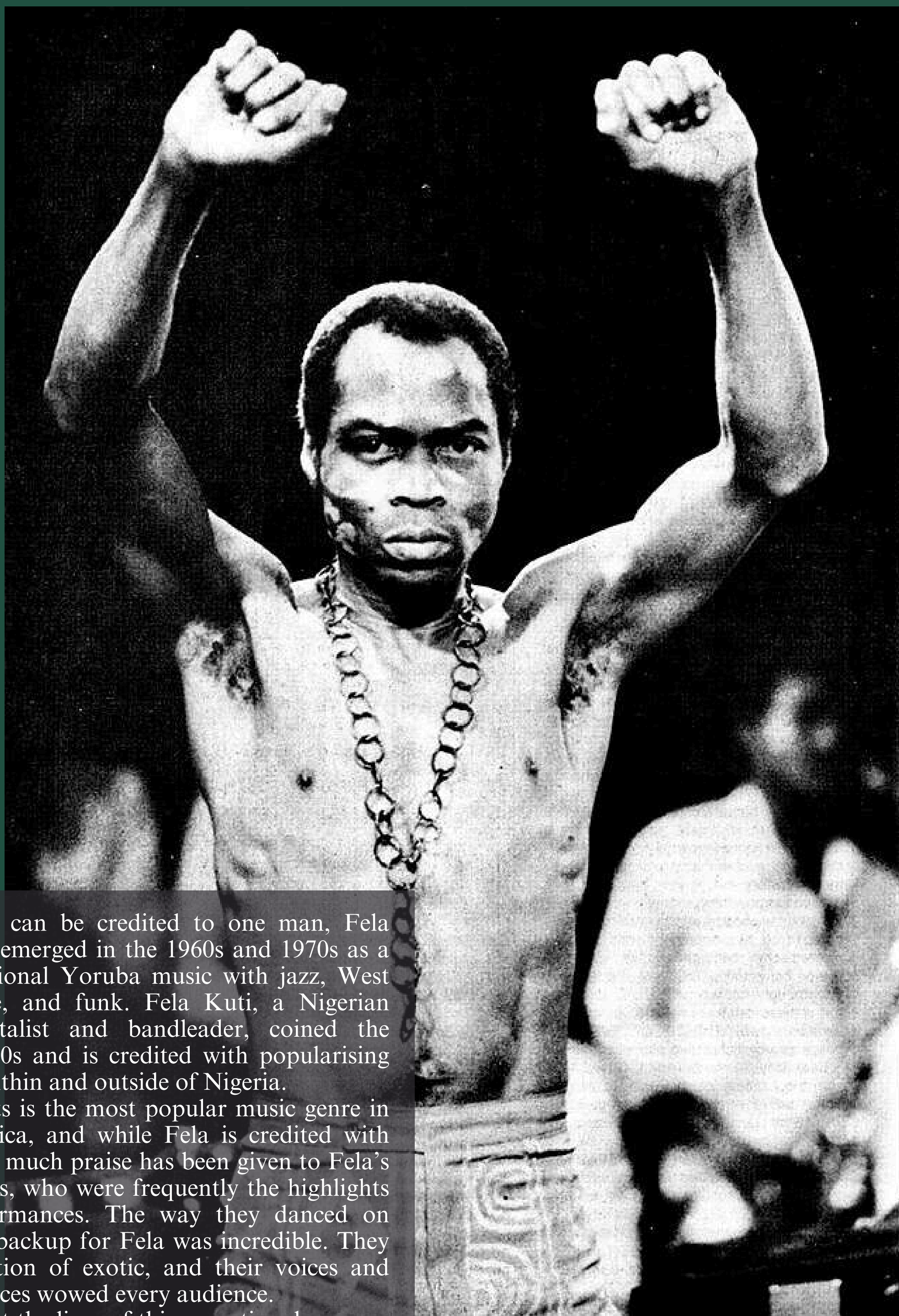
*Pottery shrine piece*



*Wall of the great enclosure, Great Zimbabwe*



# Fela Kuti's Kalakuta Queens – Afrobeat Forgotten Heroes



Afrobeat today can be credited to one man, Fela Kuti. the genre emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a fusion of traditional Yoruba music with jazz, West African highlife, and funk. Fela Kuti, a Nigerian multi-instrumentalist and bandleader, coined the term in the 1960s and is credited with popularising the style both within and outside of Nigeria.

Today, afrobeats is the most popular music genre in and out of Africa, and while Fela is credited with inventing it, not much praise has been given to Fela's Kalakuta queens, who were frequently the highlights of Fela's performances. The way they danced on stage and sang backup for Fela was incredible. They were the definition of exotic, and their voices and stage performances wowed every audience.

When we look at the lives of this exceptional women, they stood behind Fela, never wavering. The kalakuta queens were fela's pillar and backbone throughout his struggle." They stood up for him in the face of adversity, but were given little credit in comparison to Fela. It becomes necessary to tell their story because a Fela story would be incomplete without his women.



The Kalakuta Queens were a source of inspiration and strength for Fela and because of their involvement with Fela, they also endured intimidation and torture from the police and the general public.

1. They were fearless, courageous, and loyal women: According to Omolara, one of the 27 wives of Fela Kuti, testified about Fela's women's devotion and loyalty to him, she said "After the attack on Kalakuta Republic in 1977, when soldiers came for us with clubs, petrol, whips, and matches, I was hospitalised for two weeks." They later charged us with contempt of court, but the judge released us because we had no case to answer. They thrashed the hell out of me. It was a horrible experience that I will never forget, but that didn't stop us from rallying behind Fela. Some of us were beaten and even raped by the soldiers. "I was stabbed in a particularly sensitive area of my body."

The kalakuta queens never left Fela's side during his ordeal. They were there for him through thick and thin.

2. They contributed to the promotion of African contemporary arts through fashion: After Fela, they were the main attraction. Kalakuta was raised ten steps higher by the women. They introduced elegance and exoticism to afrobeats. Until their arrival, the Afrobeat scene did not become the artistic trend that it is today. The way they decorated their faces with beautiful patterns. Their necks and waists

were beaded. They were a zealot.

3. They were the provocateurs of their generation: As teenagers, they stormed Kalakuta and lived freely, disregarding society's rules. Regardless of who was watching, they smoked marijuana. They couldn't care less about what other people thought. They were content doing what they loved, which was dancing and singing.

4. They loved Fela: Fela Kuti's wives expressed satisfaction with their decision to remain with him. When asked why they chose to stay with him despite the difficulties of being with a man like Fela, Najite Mokoro, responded "Because I like him. I understand him. He fights for African freedom and I like him for that too. All of that again. He used to do for me very much and I don't know, I can't leave him. I just like him. I don't know why. Because what Fela can do for me my father can't do it for me, and my mother too can't do it for me".

Fela may have been the creator and originator of afrobeat, and his legacy will live on in Nigerian arts and pop culture. The Kalakuta Queens, on the other hand, are the forgotten heroes of Fela's legacy. They instilled pride in a generation of women who had previously been marginalised by society, and they helped persuade everyone that Fela's Shrine was, in fact, a safe haven where marginalised people could express themselves freely.





# **Creatives Dont Compete' Says Ismaila Rufai, the Conceptual Artist Fusing Fashion With Culture**

The African conceptual art scene is distinguished by a diverse group of artists who interpret and capture socioeconomic realities, political challenges, rich traditions, and diverse beauty.

The idea behind the work is more important than the finished art object. It emerged as an art movement in the 1960s.

Alternative culture's correspondent spoke briefly with Ismaila Rufai, a young Nigerian conceptual artist who is fusing fashion with culture.



**1. Tell us a little about yourself, your childhood, where you live and how you started in the craft of photography**

*My name is Ismaila Rufai undergraduate studying telecom engineering in ahmedu bello university..no too much history on my childhood but I know I had a tough childhood cause of parents state at that point currently living in kuje Abuja and my craft started off at 2016 when I started loving colours I fell really deep for art and I started training though no sufficient equipment but I made best with the little I've got*

**2. What type of photography do you do and where do you get the inspiration for your work?**

*well I do mostly conceptual art and as well fashion paired with culture that falling back to where am from..I don't really have people I look up to i just sit and write out my concepts and try to bring them to life*

**3. We hear the challenges of not being able to earn enough money while being photographers. Is it easy to be a photographer in Nigeria? What kind of obstacles do you run into?**

*In Nigeria compared to lot of state out there feel it difficult to make money why there is alot of talented photographers even if the pay isn't so much competition is high and the Community as well believe it irrelevant to some point unless u meet the few that are enlighten to the concept of art the obstacles I've experienced here is Creatives here experience extortion I mean not so long I got assaulted even broke my right arm cause I didn't sort the person guarding a location as he claimed location that no one owns it really sad this are the few obstacles I've experienced so far.*







A portrait of Nneka Michel, a fashion icon, wearing a wide-brimmed, light-colored hat. She has vibrant, multi-colored eye makeup in shades of purple, blue, and pink, and matching bright blue and pink lips. She is wearing a light-colored, textured knit sweater and a pearl necklace with a large orange pendant. Her hand is resting near her chin. The background is a blurred city street with buildings.

# Coming From Africa, Color is Everything - Nneka Michel Talks Fashion

Nneka Michel wowed us when videos of her creative ways of combining bright colours in her outfits first went viral on Tiktok in 2020. The fashion icon and mother shares her experiences, journey, inspiration, and everything else that goes into the creation of her viral videos.

Nneka rose to prominence after her videos, in which she wore colourful outfits inspired by the flags of various countries, went viral. Since then, many people have asked her to create outfits in the colours of their country's flag or outfits inspired by a theme.

In this interview with Alternative culture, Nneka explained how everything began and how it is progressing.





### 1. Can we know who Nneka Michel is?

*Michel is my husband's name. I was born in Nigeria, Enugu state to be precise. I moved to Germany, 14 years ago. I'm married with three daughters.*

### 2. How important is fashion to you?

*Sometimes we do something without knowing why we are doing it. It's just comes out naturally and it has been a passion and it empowers other people because it's a language. Fashion is an expression for me. As a child, I grew up watching my dad wearing suits all the time, I lost him early in life, but I just adored the way he styled his suits, so I guess that's where the passion for fashion came from.*

### 3. How does it make you feel to see your videos go viral?

*It's so uplifting and then we get the comments where women are like saying 'oh you have been my inspiration'. This is the rewarding moment for me. When you know that you have inspired someone positively, it is very important for me to know that I have done something that has a positive impact on people. So, I feel humbled seeing my video going this far and getting these comments and all that.*



**4. When you started, did you know that it would come this far?**

*So, during the first lockdown, 2020 and I was locked in here with my two kids. My oldest daughter has been telling me. "Hey mum there is this thing called Tik Tok". Of course, I love dressing up and I've been dressing up and people would always tell me "oh you should do this, you should be active on the internet ". Do some fashion tips and all that but I never took it seriously because I was busy with studies, work, kids, and family. So during the lockdown I sat down here with my kids chatting with them to keep them busy and my daughter said "oh mom, I want to download this" so as an African woman, I said I'm sorry "you cannot be on social media, you are a child" Later I said okay, now I have an idea. Let's download it on my phone and we can do something and because we all love dancing me and my kids. Initially we started with dancing, learning choreography, we would stay here learning all these moves, laughing and laughing and doing this thing and posting it. I started that, and then sometimes I started with transitions and just like that.*

*I keep getting followers and positive comments. I keep growing and growing, before I knew it, I got like 1000 followers. When I got 1000 followers, I thought, wow! Okay I could go live because if you get 1000 followers you can go live and my daughter said, "you have to, you have to go live" and I was like what am I going to say when I get there. So, from 1000 to 2000 to 10,000 followers. Then I started with transitions and doing all these fashion transitions and all that and remember even my dance videos used to go viral. I get like 30,000 likes and I'm like okay, that's good. The first one that hit me was the first video I made with a stranger. Then I had this idea, I told my daughter, You know sometimes you don't know what to do. You want to do transition you have no idea and I told my daughter I want to start a transition where I would start at home and I will end up outside then we do the next one after going to service.*

*it was on a Sunday and my daughter was "what nonsense is that mom! "I said I want it like that.*

*So, I did this video, and I did this transition in the train station and I posted it. That time I don't even know how to edit it. I used to do my video on Tik Tok and suddenly, the video went bombastic. My highlight was when Jessica Alba commented on the video and started following me and I'm like what?!*

*The support system is from my kids. My kids, they do the video, they work with me and my Manager, Sir Bucks, he has been with me even when I feel like " oh man I can't do this" he is like "come on come on".*

**5. Your Instagram bio says, "Telling my story through fashion", what is this story that you're trying to tell?**

*What I want the world to know about me is that in everything, the struggles, and the defects that we have in life, if we collectively put them together, we all are beautiful enough and capable.*

**6. How are you able to match bright colors together?**

*The thing is, I don't think. I'm known for not thinking. It's more like a playground now, it just flows. I'm coming from Africa where color is everything and I just*

*must embrace it. When you talk of 'Ankara', our mothers in their glorious activities when they want to go for parties, all you'll see is them wearing is glamorous colors. You'll never see them wearing dark colors unless they are mourning their partners or family member. If not, everything is bright colors.*

**7. Is the name of the Brand Important when You're buying your clothes?**

*It's not the brand, it's you. Brand doesn't matter. It's not the brand I'm selling, it's the style. My own is that you can spend less while looking beautiful and glamorous. Most of the things I wear, I do not buy them at a very expensive prices. So, it like trying to say, you can look good without breaking the bank. You don't have to buy Gucci or Channel to look amazing, just make use of what you have and present it, showing that I am beautiful with what I have.*

**8. How would you describe your style?**

*I love varieties. There was one of my videos that I pulled off the tomboy look and that's how I go back out sometimes. I love comfortable clothing and sometimes in a very class way. It's just the variety, it's the styles of life. I love fashion because you can experiment with it and create your own world.*

**9. Have you ever influenced someone's fashion style?**

*One I got recently was when I dressed in a coat for this Indian Inspired outfit and this lady actually went shopping and got the exact same outfit, took a picture of it and sent me a message with it saying "you are my inspiration" as a proof that I was bringing her out of her shell into wearing more bright colors. I get a lot of people that dress like me.*

**10. how did you come up with the idea of incorporating colors of flags into your outfits?**

*I made a video and posted it and people would comment asking me to pair different colors and I can vividly recall that someone wrote something and put a flag emoji, I looked and it and said! what does she want? Does she want me to do something with it? Then I looked at it and I went to my wardrobe and said, "okay, let me just try this flag thing." So, I paired the colors, and I created a video and from putting that first video, it just kept bringing more requests and I think I'll spend like 20 years before I do all the videos for all the flags.*

**11. What Fashion Advice do you like to give?**

*For my African sisters especially, be humble. Just work hard and that little thing you can afford buy it and rock it.*

**12. Is there something we should be expecting from you soon?**

*Yes, I like to surprise my people, but something is cooking.*

**13. Is there something you would like to share with Alternative culture and our readers?**



*Yeah, when people see my videos, they think I have the perfect life and I don't have any struggles, but we all have struggles. I have my struggles; I have my mountains to climb but I work through it with pride and faith. Just trust in your potentials, with less comparison and more hard work.*





# The Christ Apostolic Church and the Movement That Shaped Nigerian Gospel Music



The story of gospel music in Nigeria cannot be fully told without recognising the immense role played by the Christ Apostolic Church. Long before gospel music became a commercial genre with concert stages and digital platforms, CAC had already laid a strong foundation through its choir culture, indigenous compositions and deeply spiritual performance style. In many ways, the church helped shape what Nigerian gospel music would eventually become. From the early decades of its growth, CAC placed music at the centre of worship. Songs were not treated as fillers between sermons but as vehicles for prayer, prophecy, teaching and collective spiritual experience. This approach encouraged creativity within the church and gave rise to choirs whose influence extended far beyond their local assemblies. By the 1980s and 1990s, when recorded gospel music was still finding its footing in Nigeria, CAC choirs were already producing songs that circulated widely on vinyl records and cassette tapes, becoming staples in homes, churches and Christian gatherings. One of the most important symbols of this legacy is the CAC Good Women Choir, Ibadan, led by Mrs D.A Fasoyin. Formed in the mid 1970s as part of the Good Women Association of the church, the choir grew from a church-based ensemble into a nationally

recognised gospel institution. Their songs were simple, deeply scriptural and emotionally resonant, drawing heavily from indigenous melodies and Yoruba lyrical expression. This made their music instantly relatable to everyday Nigerians, especially women, families and grassroots worshippers.

The release of songs like *Odun Nlo Sopin* marked a defining moment in Nigerian gospel music. It became more than a song; it was an annual spiritual ritual, signalling reflection, gratitude and hope as the year drew to a close. Decades later, the song remains relevant, still sung across denominations, markets, radio stations and prayer grounds. The enduring nature of this music speaks to how deeply it connected with the spiritual and cultural life of the people.

Beyond the music itself, the visual and performance elements of CAC gospel also left a lasting mark. Long before the era of polished gospel music videos, CAC choirs were already known for expressive group movements, coordinated gestures and rhythmic body language during performances. These were not choreographed for entertainment alone but served as extensions of worship, reinforcing the message of the songs and drawing congregations into active participation. When choir recordings later appeared



on video formats, these movements became a visual signature that influenced how gospel music was performed and presented in Nigeria.

The 1980s and 1990s represented a crucial period for gospel music in Nigeria, and CAC stood at the centre of that growth. At a time when secular music dominated popular culture, CAC choirs proved that gospel music could command attention, loyalty and emotional depth without losing its spiritual focus. Their recordings sold widely, not because of aggressive promotion, but because people saw their own faith, struggles and hopes reflected in the songs.



# **Abayomi Shogbade: Reframing African Identity Through Fine Art Photography**





Abayomi Shogbade, born on May 27, 1993, in Ogun State, Nigeria, is a seasoned portrait and fine art photographer and art director with over eight years of professional experience. The only child of his family, Abayomi's academic journey began at Grait International College in Ota, Ogun State, where he graduated as one of the top students in the WASSCE.

In 2010, Abayomi was admitted to the prestigious University of Lagos to study Microbiology. His academic excellence continued as he pursued and completed a master's degree in the same field at the University of Lagos. Despite his scientific endeavours, Abayomi's passion for the arts and photography was evident from a young age. A self-taught artist and photographer, his creative talents were frequently sought after by his peers, even as he excelled in his scientific studies.

During his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) year, Abayomi rekindled his love for art and photography through various recreational activities and explorations of nature. This period of self-discovery prompted him to transform his hobby into a professional pursuit. By 2016, Abayomi had firmly established himself as a professional photographer, specializing in portrait and fine art photography.

Over the past eight years, Abayomi has built an impressive portfolio. His work is characterised by a deep appreciation for natural beauty and human expression, often capturing the subtle nuances that define his subjects. Abayomi draws profound inspiration from African mythology, culture, and traditions. His photographs are deeply rooted in his personal experiences, capturing what he sees, hears, feels, and lives.

In addition to his photography, Abayomi is also an accomplished art director, bringing a unique vision and cohesive style to his projects.

In 2023, Abayomi relocated to Swansea, United Kingdom, where he earned a degree in Biomedical Science. Now, he is continuing to advance his career in fine art photography,





# The Introspective Art of Abayomi Shogbade







Abayomi Shogbade's artworks unfold like a quiet but insistent conversation between memory, identity, and form. His practice does not shout for attention. Instead, it invites prolonged looking, rewarding viewers who are willing to sit with ambiguity, texture, and emotional restraint. In a digital space often driven by speed and spectacle, his work resists instant consumption, choosing depth over virality. His palette often leans toward earthy, muted tones layered with moments of contrast. Browns, blacks, greys, and washed pigments dominate, evoking soil, skin, and weathered surfaces. These colours ground the work in something elemental and ancestral, while occasional sharp highlights introduce emotional friction. The textures feel deliberate, almost tactile, as if the surface itself carries history. Paint appears worked, revisited, and sometimes scarred, reinforcing the idea that identity is built through repetition and

revision rather than perfection. Cultural references in his work are present but never overstated. Rather than leaning on obvious symbolism, Shogbade embeds cultural consciousness in posture, skin tone, gesture, and mood. His art feels rooted in lived experience rather than theoretical representation. This grounding gives the work authenticity and prevents it from becoming illustrative or didactic. It speaks to Black identity not as a monolith but as a layered, evolving condition shaped by personal history and broader social realities. Abayomi Shogbade's practice reflects a confidence in restraint and a trust in the viewer's ability to engage thoughtfully. His work does not aim to explain itself fully, and that is precisely where its power lies. His art offers a rare kind of clarity: one that emerges slowly, through attention, reflection, and emotional honesty.







# Yoruba Thrift System (Ajo): One of Africa's Enduring Financial Models



Long before the introduction of modern banking in Nigeria, the Yoruba people had already developed a structured and reliable system of saving and credit known as Ajo. For centuries, this indigenous financial practice has played a central role in economic life across Yoruba communities, proving that structured money management existed long before colonial banking institutions arrived in the region.

Ajo operates on trust, discipline and collective responsibility. Members contribute a fixed amount of money at regular intervals, usually weekly or monthly, and each participant receives the total contribution in turn. The system allowed traders, farmers and families to raise capital, fund businesses, pay school fees and handle emergencies without relying on formal banks. This traditional structure formed the foundation of financial planning within Yoruba society and remains widely practiced today.

Historians and economists often point to Ajo as evidence of the long standing financial intelligence of the Yoruba people. From an early age, children are introduced to the concept of savings by watching their parents, particularly mothers, participate in Ajo groups. Many recall helping to collect contributions, record payments, or deliver funds to members. These

early experiences helped instill financial discipline, accountability and an understanding of money management that continues into adulthood.

This deep rooted financial culture is reflected in modern Nigeria's banking and finance sector. A significant number of the country's major banks were founded by Yoruba entrepreneurs or have Yoruba individuals as major shareholders or key executives. The strong presence of Yoruba professionals in banking, finance and investment sectors is often linked to this early exposure to structured saving and financial planning.

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The relevance of the Ajo system extends beyond

Nigeria's borders. In recent years, Nigerian students studying in the United Kingdom have adapted the traditional Ajo model to meet modern needs. Faced with high tuition fees and living costs, many students form savings circles where members contribute monthly and take turns receiving lump sums to pay school fees or cover major expenses. This modern adaptation has helped many students avoid high interest loans and remain financially stable abroad. Despite the rise of digital banking and fintech solutions, Ajo continues to thrive because it is built on trust, community and shared responsibility. Its flexibility allows it to adapt to changing economic realities while preserving its core principles. Today, some cooperatives and fintech platforms are even integrating Ajo style savings into digital formats, ensuring its survival in a rapidly evolving financial world.

The enduring success of the Ajo system highlights the financial wisdom embedded in Yoruba culture. It stands as a reminder that long before Western banking structures were introduced, African societies had already developed effective, sustainable financial systems that continue to shape economic behaviour today.





**Celebrating a Lifetime  
of Sound: Bola Ojotu  
on Staying Active and  
Passionate in Her Craft**



Legendary Nigerian cultural singer Chief Omobolanle Olayinka Ojotu, professionally known as Bola Ojotu, has made it clear that age has not slowed her down and she has no plans to retire from the music industry any time soon. The Okunmehintosa of Owo Kingdom shared insights into her long and vibrant musical journey, her passion for culture, and what keeps her motivated after decades in entertainment.

Bola Ojotu's musical career began in 1990, supported wholeheartedly by her parents, who recognized her natural talent and encouraged her pursuit of music. Reflecting on her beginnings, Ojotu said her gift was "from God," and she has spent the years since building a legacy rooted in cultural expression and artistic excellence.

Over the course of her career, Ojotu has released more than 21 albums, a remarkable catalog that spans decades of creative output. Her music has not only entertained but also celebrated the rich traditions of her heritage. Her album Otedolafe and many others earned her prestigious honours, including the title Okunmehintosa of Owo Kingdom bestowed by the late Oba David Victor Folagbade

Olateru Olagbegi, CFR, a testament to her cultural impact.

Her contributions to cultural music have been recognised beyond Owo as well. Albums such as Ajiroba earned her the title Amuludun of Isaba Ekiti, while other works brought her recognition in different states and communities, highlighting the breadth of her influence across Nigeria.

Despite her many achievements, Ojotu says she has not slowed down. Far from resting on past success, she continues to produce music and honour new cultural milestones.

When asked whether she had considered slowing down after years in the industry, Ojotu's response was emphatic: she is still fully "functioning well in the industry," with her passion for music as strong as ever.

For Bola Ojotu, music is not just a career, it is a lifelong expression of culture, identity, and spiritual calling. As she continues to perform and inspire, her story remains a powerful example of resilience and dedication in the dynamic world of Nigerian cultural music.





# The Enlightenment and Why Africa Is Being Left Behind

*By Kelvin O Johnson*



When I look at Africa today, all I see is the western world In the Middle and dark Ages, The western world use to be very very superstitious and extremely religious. People believed emphatically in all kinds of stupid and nonsensical things, some of which a lot of the times led to very very tragic consequences.

Examples would include a belief in witches and evil spirits as a cause of bad luck and misfortune... a pervasive belief in magic,charms and sorcery... and the religious linking of this beliefs to satan.

All of this were blamed for many of the hardships that plagued the western population during this period. It got so bad that it birthed the barbarism of burning individuals living in isolation suspected to practice witchcraft , voodoo and charms, as their activities were attributed to their hardships.

Hundreds and thousands of innocent individuals at various times were at the wrong side of such barbarism and were burnt alive at the stake. Witch hunts and superstitions caused many deaths and worried the minds of countless people.

Other superstitious beliefs include the common “god bless you “ belief when you sneeze .. it is known to have come from the Middle Ages in medieval Europe .. There was a belief that sneezing gave Satan the opportunity to enter the body and the person who

sneezed needed the help of God to exorcise the devil and chase it out.

Saying “God bless you” was believed to be a way to keep the Devil from entering the body and therefore save the person who had sneezed. Yes it was that bad. There was also the prevailing belief that a person could ‘sneeze out their soul’. This was also counteracted by a person saying “God bless you” or covering the face to keep the soul in. This superstition was encouraged with the spread of illness during a time where there was little way to help people to overcome devastating ailments.

So the western world was just as .. if not waaaay more superstitious than Africa is today. So what changed? How did they get from where they were,steeped in ignorance, superstition and magical thinking , to where they are now?

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment, also known as “the Age of Reason”, was an intellectual movement in the eighteenth century that emphasized reason over superstition and science over blind faith.

Enlightenment thinkers like Thomas Paine , Spinoza , Thomas Jefferson , John Locke, Immanuel Kant ,



David Hume , Isaac Newton, Voltaire etc questioned accepted and popularly held beliefs and spread new ideas about openness and investigation. There were several ideas that dominated enlightenment thoughts .. Including empiricism , skepticism, rationalism ,naturalism, progressivism and cosmopolitanism.

Rationalism is the idea that humans are capable of using their faculty of reason and brain to gain knowledge . This was very different and a sharp turn away from the prevailing idea that people needed to rely on religious scripture, church authorities or passed down superstitious beliefs for knowledge.

Skepticism is the attitude of doubting knowledge claims set forth in various areas. Skeptics challenged the adequacy or reliability of these claims by asking what principles they are based upon or what they actually establish, especially of religious and superstitious claims.

Empiricism promotes the idea that knowledge comes from experience and observation of the world...as well as experiment.

Naturalism is the idea that only natural laws and forces (as opposed to supernatural ones) operate in the universe. Instead of using supernatural or spiritual explanations, naturalism focuses on explanations that come from the laws of nature. ...

Naturalism refers to a realistic approach to art that rejects idealized experiences. Progressivism is the idea that through their powers of reason and observation, humans can make unlimited, linear progress over time.

Finally, cosmopolitanism reflected Enlightenment thinkers' view of themselves as actively engaged citizens of the world as opposed to provincial and close-minded individuals. In all, Enlightenment thinkers endeavored to be ruled by reason, not prejudice.

So What did the enlightenment achieve? The Enlightenment produced numerous intellectual books, essays, revolutionary political laws, ideas , political modernization in terms of focusing on democratic values and institutions and the creation of modern, liberal democracies.

Enlightenment thinkers sought to curtail the political power of organized religion, and thereby prevent another age of intolerant religious war, not to mention the multiple inventions, and numerous scientific discoveries.

The enlightenment gave us the modern world we have today.

So like I said in the beginning, when I look at Africa today and my country Nigeria, all I see is the western world in the dark ages 400 years ago . A continent crippled by superstitious beliefs ,over religiousness and dogmatism.

Just like the burning of witches on the stake by medieval western world , the continuously and community reinforced superstitious beliefs that human body parts can give you money has lead to the death of innocent victims here in Africa today. Superstitious beliefs and over religiousness have crippled societal development here in Africa.

Africa today is just like the western world centuries ago, we are still living in the dark ages and in ignorance and only an enlightenment type revolution like the one overly outnumbered modern day scientific and philosophically minded African skeptics , rationalists , humanist ,progressivist , irreligious , naturalists and empiricist advocate.

A movement i am proudly a member of and you should be too. We need to wake our brothers and sisters up .. this is the only way Africa can really compete in the modern world and with the rest of the world.



# When Admiration Crosses the Line: Cultural Appreciation and Appropriation



Cultural appreciation becomes appropriation at the point where admiration turns into erasure, entitlement, or misrepresentation. It is the thin but important line between saying “I love this culture and want to honour it” and saying “I like this aesthetic and I will use it however I want, regardless of its meaning or origin.”

A trending TikTok sound captures this moment perfectly. “I am going to marry a Nigerian and you are going to wear a gele to my wedding.” What is meant to be playful has also become symbolic of a wider global fascination with Nigerian culture, especially Nigerian weddings. From across Africa, the diaspora, and even beyond the continent, people are increasingly drawn to the colour, energy, fashion, music and ritual of Nigerian celebrations. Nigerian weddings have become cultural exports, widely admired and imitated.

On the surface, this admiration is flattering. It reflects the global visibility and influence Nigerian culture has attained, particularly through social media, music, film and fashion. Many people genuinely want to participate out of respect, joy and curiosity. They want to dance to Nigerian songs, wear Nigerian attire, and experience the richness of the culture. That, in itself, is not a problem.

The tension begins when participation loses context.

One of the clearest examples is the gele. It is no secret that head wraps exist across Africa and have done so for centuries. Women from different regions have always covered, tied or adorned their heads in ways that reflect identity, status, spirituality or practicality. What distinguishes the gele is not the idea of a head tie itself, but its form, scale and cultural meaning.

The gele is a Yoruba invention. It is elaborate, structured, bold and often dramatic in size. Unlike simpler head wraps worn for utility, the gele is ceremonial. It is carefully tied, often stiffened, sculpted and designed to command attention. In Yoruba culture, it is not an afterthought. It is frequently the centrepiece of the entire outfit. There is a long-held belief that a woman is not fully dressed without her gele. It signifies dignity, celebration, maturity, pride and presence.

As the global obsession with Nigerian weddings has grown, so has the spread of the gele. Today, many Africans from other regions, people in the diaspora and even non-Africans wear it. Again, wearing it is not the issue. The problem arises when the gele is treated like a costume rather than a cultural symbol. When it is worn with no understanding, no acknowledgement and no respect for its origins.





When it becomes just another exotic accessory to be tried on for aesthetics, social media content or trend participation.

More troubling is when appropriation goes beyond misuse into outright claims. In some cases, individuals or groups begin to detach the gele from its Yoruba roots, presenting it as generic African wear or even claiming it as part of their own culture. That is where appreciation clearly crosses the line. Appreciation gives credit. Appropriation rewrites history.

It is important to be clear. No one is saying the gele should be gatekept or restricted. Cultures grow by being shared. Influence is not theft by default. But sharing requires honesty. It requires naming origins. It requires humility. It requires understanding that cultural items are not empty visuals but carry history, values and meaning.

When someone wears a gele and acknowledges that it comes from the Yoruba people of Nigeria, that is appreciation. When someone learns how and why it is worn, that is respect. When someone treats it as a playful costume, strips it of meaning, or claims ownership over it, that is appropriation.

The growing fascination with Nigerian culture is a testament to its power. Nigerian weddings, fashion and traditions resonate because they are expressive, confident and unapologetic. But with visibility comes responsibility. Respect must grow alongside influence.

Appreciation should amplify the culture and the people who created it. Appropriation silences them. The difference lies not in the act of wearing a gele, but in the intention, the knowledge and the acknowledgement behind it.





# Unveiling Everyday Beauty: A Review of Femi Morakinyo's Artistic Mastery



Femi Morakinyo's art is an exploration of the familiar, rendered with a distinctive twist that both captivates and mesmerizes the viewer. Stepping into the realm of Morakinyo's creations is akin to entering a world where the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary, where the mundane is imbued with a profound sense of beauty and significance.

One of the most striking aspects of Morakinyo's oeuvre is his use of sticker-like images, reminiscent of mail stickers, which immediately draw the viewer's attention. This unconventional choice serves as a testament to Morakinyo's willingness to think outside the confines of traditional artistic norms, pushing the boundaries of what constitutes contemporary art.

Central to Morakinyo's body of work is the portrayal of black men and women, who take center stage in each painting. However, far from eclipsing the surrounding elements, these figures coexist harmoniously with their environment, creating a rich tapestry of narratives that unfold within each canvas.

In "In Its Been Ages," Morakinyo presents us with a poignant vignette of domestic life, where a black woman eagerly opens a letter, her anticipation palpable even before its contents are fully revealed.





This attention to detail and nuance infuses the painting with a sense of intimacy, inviting the viewer to become a silent observer of the everyday moments that define our existence.

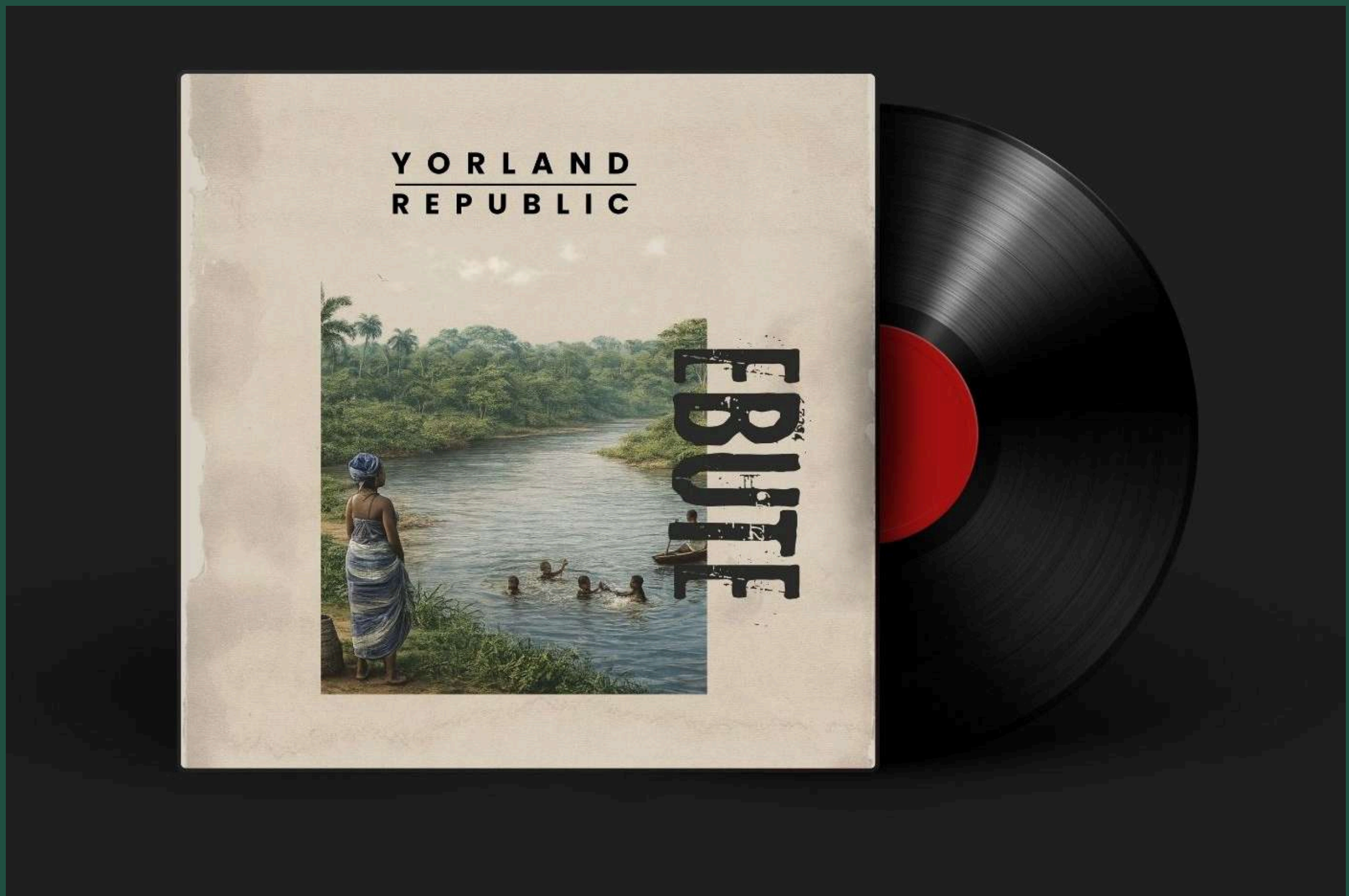
What sets Morakinyo's work apart is his ability to imbue his subjects with a universal relatability. Whether depicting a housewife, a young woman, a military officer, or a clerk, each character resonates with authenticity, embodying the diverse spectrum of human experiences.

However, it is in "Association Day" that Morakinyo truly shines, offering a glimpse into the past with a nostalgic reverence that is both heartwarming and evocative. Transporting us to a Nigerian household in the 1980s, Morakinyo meticulously recreates the ambiance of a bygone era, from the aluminum plates sitting on a table, somewhere in the corner of the house, to the vintage sewing machine occupying pride of place in the living room. It is a testament to Morakinyo's mastery that he is able to evoke such a potent sense of nostalgia, inviting us to revel in the beauty of a time long past.

In conclusion, Femi Morakinyo is a visionary artist whose work transcends the boundaries of time and space. Through his evocative portrayal of everyday life, he invites us to rediscover the beauty that surrounds us, hidden in plain sight. With each brushstroke, Morakinyo breathes life into his subjects, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary and leaving an indelible mark on the canvas of contemporary art.



# The Return of Vinyl Culture and the Need to Feel Music Again



For a long time, music drifted away from the physical world. Songs became files, then streams, then background noise we barely touched or truly owned. With a swipe, we could access millions of tracks, but in the process, something intimate was lost. Now, vinyl culture is making a quiet but powerful comeback, alongside renewed interest in CDs and even cassette tapes. This return is not driven by nostalgia alone. It is a response to a deep desire to reconnect with music in a more personal and meaningful way.

Vinyl records are no longer just objects from the past. They represent a slower, more intentional way of listening. When you play a vinyl, you are involved in the process. You remove the record from its sleeve, place it carefully on the turntable, and lower the needle. That small ritual already prepares your mind to listen, not just hear. Music stops being background sound and becomes an experience that demands attention.

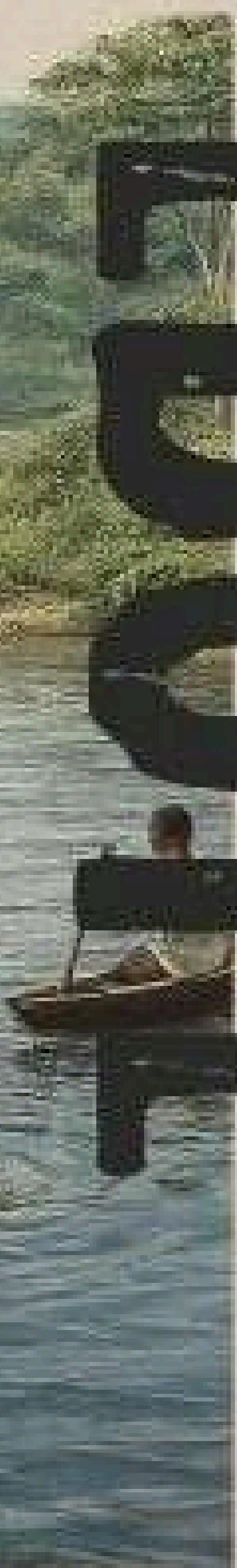
The old ways of listening to music on vinyl, CDs, and tapes are often considered the best because they encourage focus. You listen to albums as complete bodies of work, not shuffled fragments. Artists originally designed albums to be heard in sequence, with intros, interludes, and outros that tell a story.

. Physical formats respect that structure. You sit with the music from beginning to end, absorbing the emotions as the artist intended.

Beyond sound, physical music allows you to see music. Album art becomes part of the experience. Holding a record or CD while listening gives you access to the artist's visual language. The cover artwork, typography, liner notes, and photographs offer clues into the world the artist is inviting you into. These visuals are deeply personal. They reflect the mood, politics, identity, and emotions behind the music. Streaming reduces album art to a tiny square on a screen, but vinyl sleeves turn it into a canvas you can study, feel, and understand.

There is also a sense of ownership that digital platforms cannot replace. Streaming gives access, not possession. A physical collection, however small, feels like a part of you. Each record, CD, or tape carries memories of when you bought it, where you found it, or who introduced you to it. Over time, your collection becomes a personal archive of your life and taste. Music becomes something you live with, not something that disappears when a subscription ends. The comeback of vinyl culture is also about value. In an age where music feels disposable, physical formats remind us that music is art, labour, and expression.





Buying a record is a way of supporting artists more directly and acknowledging the effort behind a body of work. It restores respect to the music and the people who create it.

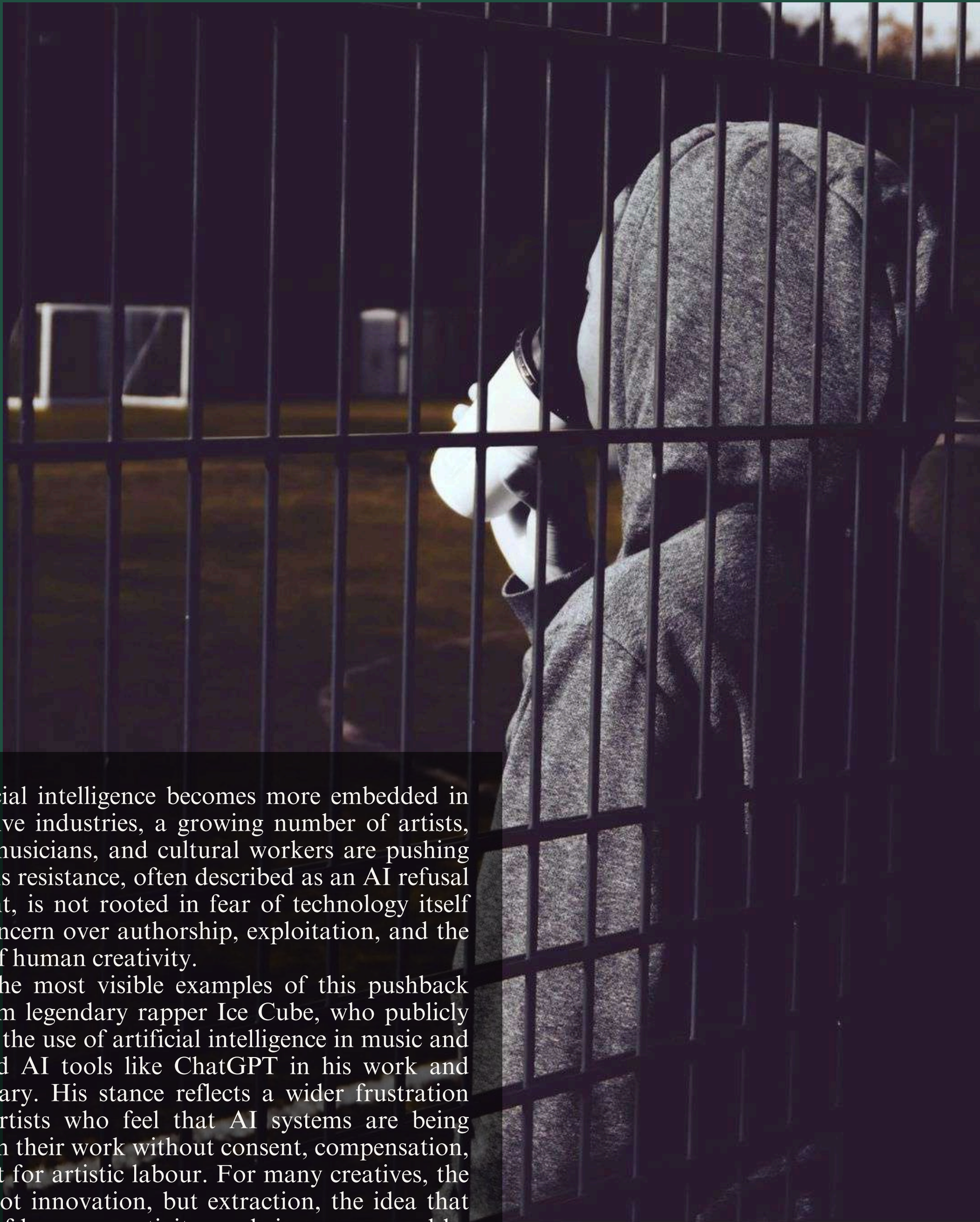
As more listeners rediscover vinyl, CDs, and tapes, they are not rejecting modern technology. They are reclaiming a deeper relationship with music. They want to feel like they own their music again. They want to connect with sound, visuals, and stories in a way that feels human and intentional.

Music was never meant to be invisible. It was meant to be held, studied, and lived with. The revival of physical music is a reminder that listening is not just about convenience. It is about connection, ownership, and understanding the artist's world, one album at a time.





# AI Refusal Movements Among Creatives




As artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in the creative industries, a growing number of artists, writers, musicians, and cultural workers are pushing back. This resistance, often described as an AI refusal movement, is not rooted in fear of technology itself but in concern over authorship, exploitation, and the erosion of human creativity.

One of the most visible examples of this pushback came from legendary rapper Ice Cube, who publicly criticized the use of artificial intelligence in music and referenced AI tools like ChatGPT in his work and commentary. His stance reflects a wider frustration among artists who feel that AI systems are being trained on their work without consent, compensation, or respect for artistic labour. For many creatives, the issue is not innovation, but extraction, the idea that decades of human creativity are being repurposed by machines owned by large corporations.

Across the music industry, several artists have spoken out against AI generated vocals and deepfake songs that imitate their voices. Musicians have warned that such tools blur the line between homage and theft, threatening both creative ownership and artistic identity. Some have gone as far as issuing takedown demands or publicly refusing to allow their voices or styles to be used in AI training datasets.





Writers and visual artists have also joined the resistance. Authors' unions and illustrator collectives in the United States and Europe have organized protests and open letters demanding transparency from tech companies. Their concerns include uncredited use of copyrighted material, loss of income, and the normalization of machine generated content over human expression. For many, AI represents not just a technological shift but a cultural one that devalues lived experience, intuition, and emotional depth.

The refusal movement is not anti technology in principle. Many of its participants use digital tools daily. What they oppose is a system that prioritizes speed, profit, and automation over consent and creativity. They argue that art is more than data, and that reducing it to patterns strips it of its social, political, and emotional meaning.

In this sense, AI refusal mirrors earlier cultural resistance movements, from musicians rejecting exploitative record contracts to filmmakers challenging studio control. It is a call for boundaries, ethics, and recognition in an era where creative labour is increasingly vulnerable to automation.

As debates around AI continue, the voices of artists like Ice Cube and countless independent creators are shaping an important question for the future: who controls creativity in the age of machines, and at what cost?



# Fragrance of a Stolen Past - Aqsa Khan Nasar's Artistic Expression Of Colonial Exploitation





Aqsa Khan Nasar is an artist who challenges the norm through her arts. A sculptor who was born and raised in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, Pakistan. Aqsa's art not only visually appeals to the eyes, but also stimulates the sense of scent. The artist infuses powerful scents into her artworks, creating a unique form of art known as olfactory art. Rather than focusing simply on visual or auditory elements, this type of art expresses itself primarily through aroma or smell.

One of Aqsa's works focuses on Pakistan and India's colonial history, which was governed by the British. During this period in Pakistani and Indian history, Great Britain exploited the country's riches, the most noteworthy of which was the spice trade. One of several contributing factors to strife between Pakistan and India, two countries that gained independence in 1947.

Aqsa made a crown based after the British crown and decorated it with spices. The artist's decision is based on the British crown's colonial history and the extraction of resources from its numerous colonies. Aqsa seeks to portray stories of Pakistan's colonial history as part of the British colony. She also paid homage to the renowned Kohinoor diamond, which has long been associated with British colonial plunder.

Her works focus not on the diamond or the crown itself, but on the fragrant spices that graced the crown and its surroundings, indicating how colonialism is about more than just wealth and territory, but also culture, identity, and how the resources stolen are still valued today.

Aqsa's replica of the British Crown is creative; the crown's arch appears to be made of metal and brass, the signage and emblem also made from the same material as the crown's arch. There are representations of the British emblem, a cross pattée at the top of the crown, and little pearls hanging down from the crown's arches. The crown lays nicely on what appears to be a green velvet cushion. The spices are also prominently shown, embellishing the environs of the crown. The pungent aroma of spices emanating from this artwork creates a strong impression in the minds of visitors of what British colonialism represented: economic exploitation of its colonies.

If there is a way to represent British exploitation in

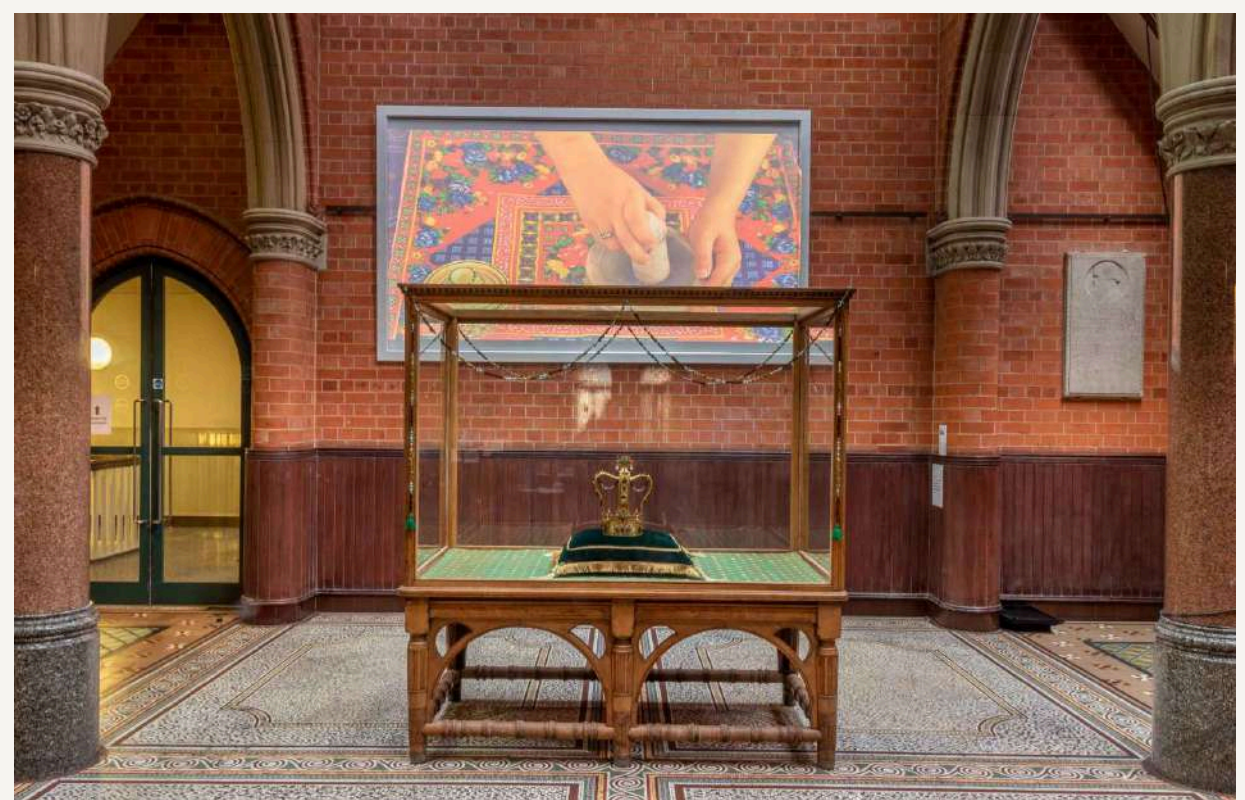
Pakistan & India, Aqsa Khan Nasar's work does so perfectly, both visually and through the sense of scent. These two regions of India and Pakistan have given the world so much, and without them, we would not have enjoyed the delectable food mixed with spices that we have today. This work not only helps us appreciate the scope and effects of British colonialism, but it also highlights one of Pakistan and India's contributions to the globe.

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The artwork may symbolize that Great Britain's riches are borne by other ethnicities who were once colonies of Britain, with the crown indicating wealth and the self portrait of the artist representing the British colonies. We see a crown modeled after the British crown design, but the woman wearing it is not a British woman, implying that the British wealth is mostly derived from the exploits carried out on these people's lands and cultures.

Aqsa Khan Nasar's artworks are nothing short of spectacular; the emotions conveyed via her works provide viewers with a sense of comprehension of British colonial history through the eyes of the oppressed. While it may be a narrative of glory for the British, it is a tale of exploitation, war, and disintegration for the Pakistanis and Indians.






A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with short, dark hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark blue, textured sweater. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Helen C Phillips on Bringing the Plight of African Americans to Light With Poetry as a Creative Outlet

Throughout history, poetry has been the most popular artistic medium, a tradition that has not been lost on the next generation.

For centuries, poets have written about social issues. For example, William Blake wrote moving poems about child chimney sweeps who put their lives and limbs in the hands of unscrupulous businessmen and now, there is a large network of young poets who use spoken words poetry,' to address social issues and the prospect of change.





Helen C Philips is a young poet from Northeast Arkansas, USA, who uses her poetry to address social issues in the United States. Alternative culture contacted Helen to find out what sparked her interest in poetry and this is what she says

Without hesitation, I can trace my passion for poetry to my rural roots. Growing up in the rural Northeast Arkansas town of Helena-West Helena, I experienced first-hand the havoc economic devastation can wreak on a community and the psyche of its people. Of my hometown's eleven thousand plus residents, only about three thousand are gainfully employed. And while Blacks make up the majority of the town (over 75%), 95% of Blacks live below the poverty line. This crime-ridden, poverty-stricken community is the place I have called home for most of my life.

Once a thriving community, Helena-West Helena lost its economic base in the 1990's when many industrial jobs moved overseas. Like so many other rural communities with dying economies, Helena-West Helena began depending solely on state and federal funds for education, housing, and basic life necessities, meanwhile experiencing high unemployment, low educational attainment, rising crime rates, and poor infrastructure.

My humble beginnings in Helena-West Helena have made me passionate about conveying the blight of African American's and also providing residents of blighted communities with a creative outlet through poetry.

Helen has also cited Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin as some of her inspiration



# Kikelomo Solomon-Ayeni: A Voice of Purpose in Contemporary Arts





Kikelomo is a passionate photographer, visual artist, and child protection advocate born in Lagos Nigeria. With a keen eye for detail and a heart dedicated to social change, she seamlessly merges her artistic talents with her advocacy work to create impactful visual narratives.

Driven by a deep love for documenting the lives of women and children, Kikelomo's photography goes beyond mere images; it serves as a powerful medium for advocacy and social awareness. She finds profound joy in capturing the essence of a child's journey, from the womb to the world, and is committed to shedding light on their stories.

Having honed her craft over the years, Kikelomo has showcased her work in several exhibitions, each telling a unique story through her lens. Notable among these are her contributions to the prestigious She-Photographers exhibitions on women (2011), X-perspective 'Battle Scars' on cancer (2014) both held at the esteemed Goethe Institute in Lagos. Her work has also been exhibited in top galleries like The Holy Art gallery London, Casa del Arte gallery Palma Spain, Nicoleta Gallery Berlin and Cipriarte Venezia gallery Spain.

Through her photography, Kikelomo advocates for the rights of women and children, amplifying their voices and shedding light on the issues affecting them. Her creative vision inspires change and fosters a more compassionate society, making a lasting impact on those who view her work.

Kikelomo recently graduated with distinction in MSc Management from the University of Derby. She plans to manage a Mobile Art gallery and a Nigerian cultural centre in the east midlands of the United Kingdom.



*African preggy ready to party 2*



*African preggy ready to party 7*







By Kikelomo SOLOMON-AYENI



# Visiting Africa? 5 Life Changing Lessons You Are Bound to Learn



Africa is a vast continent with incredible contrasts, ranging from beaches to mountains, deserts to wetlands, and mountains to endless open savannah. You can meet people whose way of life hasn't changed in centuries and witness wildlife spectacles that have followed millennia-old rhythms.

Africa is the only continent with a distinct identity among the world's seven continents. Africa's culture is extremely diverse. It has a diverse cultural heritage, a wealth of natural resources, and breathtaking tourist attractions.

A trip to Africa is something that every black person in the world should do at least once in their lives. Here are some life-changing lessons you will learn if you travel to Africa.

## 1. Discover how little is required to be truly happy

The majority of Africans emit light, joy, and happiness despite having few resources and possessions,— to the point where it touches your soul. They teach us that there is very little that is required to be truly happy. Relationships are the most important reasons for happiness in Africa, and because the continent is community oriented, you are

never truly alone. This centrality of relationships, which is so easily embedded in much of African When French Montana saw the video of the Ugandan children dancing on YouTube, he made an instagram post saying,

"There was no complaining or pain, just pure joy in the music and dancing." I was watching with the song 'Unforgettable' playing in the background when it hit me! Their movements matched the tempo, almost as if God had planned it!

“It inspired me to go find them in Uganda. My team and I searched and we found them. When we arrived, it was so sad for me to find out that one of the kids in the video died before I got to meet him, and my favourite girl Patricia had just woken up from a two-week coma. But it did not stop her from coming to the set and dancing barefoot with the others. These kids made my experience in Uganda #Unforgettable.”

## 2. Learn to appreciate life's simple pleasures.

Africa teaches you to appreciate simple pleasures. a beautiful sunrise and sunset. Smiling, happy children who are creative and innovative, particularly in the



way they come up with activities and games to play. The natural beauty that surrounds you no matter where you are.

### 3. Heartfelt generosity

Generosity that has no monetary value but is comprised of love, support, encouragement, and respect. Families band together and pool resources to celebrate the accomplishments of family members or children sharing food with the children of the family who lives next door is something you will often see. In Africa, generosity knows no bounds, and people will treat you with kindness regardless of how you look.

### 4. Learn to enjoy life and live in the moment

Africans are generally fun loving people. The Yoruba people of Nigeria are generally known for their love for parties and having a good time. On a good weekend in Yorubaland, the visible sights will be people dressed in radiant Yoruba attires, men wearing their Buba and Sokoto with Fila, women wearing Iro and Buba of various designs coupled with a large and attractive headgear with combinations of

expensive shoes and jeweleries, a street packed with tents and chairs of beautiful decor, and loud music from various angles of the neighbourhood. The video to the song *owanbe* by Simi is a good depiction of a Yoruba party in Nigeria.

### 5. Cities that are vibrant

African cities are known for their vibrant cultures. Travel to Africa has traditionally been viewed through a Western lens, with the idea of going to see the safari dominating. African culture is gaining more international attention as it becomes more prominent in fashion, music, art, and food around the world.

Cultural events like Lagos Fashion Week, Durban July, and Dak'Art have been flourishing for years, but now that they are being more widely celebrated, Africa is finally being recognised for having more to offer than the Big Five. The African Union has designated 2021 as the Year of Arts, Culture, and Heritage, and highlighting the continent's customs, crafts, religion, folklore, fashion, cuisine, music, and language will help to expand the tourism experience across Africa.



*By Femi MORAKINYO*



# Enhancement, Not Replacement: Embracing AI Art

As artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in creative industries, debates around authorship, originality, and artistic integrity have intensified. At the center of this discussion is a crucial distinction: using AI as a tool to enhance an existing artistic vision versus relying on it to generate work from nothing. Embracing AI in art does not require surrendering creative agency; rather, it invites a redefinition of authorship in which the human imagination remains central.

In this approach, AI functions as an extension of the artist's hand, not a substitute for it. The creative process begins with a concept, sketch, sound, or idea conceived by the artist. AI tools are then used to refine, reinterpret, or expand upon that foundation—adjusting textures, exploring variations, or translating ideas across mediums. The core intent, narrative, and aesthetic direction remain human-led.





This distinction is crucial. When AI is used as a generator that produces finished works from minimal prompts, authorship becomes diffuse and detached. The creative act shifts from making to selecting, raising questions about originality and ownership. In contrast, when AI operates as a modifier, it becomes comparable to a brush, a synthesizer, or a camera—technology that enhances capability without replacing creative intention.

Many contemporary artists are embracing AI as a collaborator rather than a creator. They feed it their own sketches, photographs, sounds, or texts, using it to test possibilities or push ideas beyond habitual limits. The result is not automation, but amplification. The artist remains responsible for direction, meaning, and final form, while the machine expands the range of visual or sonic outcomes available.

This approach also preserves artistic accountability. When AI generates work independently, authorship becomes ambiguous, often obscuring whose ideas are being reproduced or recombined. By grounding AI use in pre-existing human creation, artists maintain ethical clarity. The artwork remains rooted in lived experience, intention, and critical choice rather than

algorithmic randomness.

Embracing AI in this way also resists the homogenisation that can occur when many creators rely on similar prompts and datasets. When AI merely executes instructions, outputs tend to converge. But when it responds to highly specific, personally developed material, the results remain distinctive. The machine becomes a tool for variation, not a shortcut to imitation.

Importantly, this model reframes AI not as a threat to creativity but as an extension of craft. Just as photography did not eliminate painting, and digital tools did not erase traditional art, AI can expand creative language when used with discernment. The danger lies not in the technology itself, but in surrendering authorship to it.

Ultimately, embracing AI in art means reaffirming human agency. It means treating technology as a collaborator that responds to vision rather than replacing it. By grounding AI use in intention, process, and critical engagement, artists can explore new possibilities without abandoning the integrity of creation. In this way, AI becomes not a shortcut to art, but a tool that deepens the creative process rather than diminishing it.





A woman wearing a black hijab and a black dress with yellow and black patterned sleeves is standing against a dark, cloudy sky. The title is in the top right corner.

# Radical Feminism, Marriage, and Digital Polarisation in Nigeria

In recent years, radical feminist discourse in Nigeria has increasingly challenged marriage as an institution, framing it as a site of female oppression rather than partnership. While feminist critiques of marriage are not new, the contemporary Nigerian conversation, amplified by social media platforms such as TikTok, has taken on a distinctly polarising tone. The shift raises important questions about how feminist ideas circulate, how they are interpreted in local contexts, and whether online activism is advancing gender justice or deepening social division. Radical feminism, historically, emerged as a critique of patriarchal systems that structure women's subordination through family, labour, and sexuality. Within this framework, marriage has often been analysed as an institution that historically limited women's autonomy, tied them to unpaid domestic labour, and reinforced male authority. In the Nigerian context, these critiques resonate with real structural issues: unequal inheritance laws, marital expectations that burden women disproportionately, and cultural norms that normalise female sacrifice within marriage.



However, the contemporary expression of this critique, particularly on social media, has taken on a different tone. On platforms like TikTok, complex feminist theory is often reduced to simplified, emotionally charged narratives. Influencers and commentators, including figures such as Obidi, have gained large followings by presenting marriage as inherently oppressive and men as collective beneficiaries of women's suffering. These messages, often framed as empowerment, circulate through short-form content designed for virality rather than nuance.

While these conversations resonate with many women who have experienced emotional, economic, or physical harm within relationships, they also risk flattening the complexity of gender relations. The portrayal of men as a monolithic oppressor class and women as perpetual victims can shift feminism from a critique of systems to a politics of antagonism. This framing may generate engagement online, but it can also entrench resentment and obscure the structural forces, economic instability, legal inequality, cultural expectations, that shape intimate relationships.

The use of social media intensifies this dynamic. Algorithms reward outrage, absolutism, and confrontation, encouraging content that frames gender relations as a zero-sum battle. Nuanced discussions about reforming marriage, redefining partnership, or addressing systemic inequality struggle to compete with viral soundbites that pit men and women against each other. As a result, feminist discourse risks becoming less about liberation and more about moral positioning.

This shift has consequences. While it may validate personal experiences of harm, it can also alienate potential allies and reduce the space for constructive dialogue. In the Nigerian context, where social

cohesion is already strained by economic pressure and political instability, framing gender justice as a war between sexes may undermine broader efforts toward equality.

Moreover, focusing exclusively on marriage as the primary site of oppression risks overlooking the wider structures that shape women's lives. Issues such as economic precarity, lack of institutional support, inadequate legal protection, and limited access to education often have a far greater impact on women's autonomy than marriage alone. Addressing these systemic factors requires coalition-building, policy engagement, and sustained advocacy, approaches that extend beyond social media discourse.

This is not to dismiss the legitimacy of feminist

anger or the value of online spaces for sharing lived experiences. Rather, it is a call for discernment in how feminist ideas are communicated and mobilised. Challenging patriarchal norms should not necessitate demonising men or reducing complex social problems to individual moral failures.

A more constructive feminist project would reclaim nuance: critiquing harmful aspects of marriage while recognising that equitable partnerships are possible; confronting misogyny without reproducing gendered hostility; and using digital platforms not just for expression, but for education, solidarity, and systemic change.

In this sense, the Nigerian conversation around radical feminism and marriage reflects a broader global tension between liberation and polarisation, between critique and caricature. The task ahead is not to silence feminist voices, but to ensure that the pursuit of equality does not lose sight of empathy, context, and the shared goal of a more just society for all genders.



# **MOWAA, The Misrepresentation of Owo Arts and a Case for a Truly West African Museum**





The Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) in Benin City has emerged as one of Nigeria's most ambitious cultural projects of recent years. Founded in 2020 as an independent non-profit institution, its mission is to preserve, celebrate and expand knowledge of West African arts and culture through research, education, conservation and artistic engagement. The museum's campus includes research facilities, public spaces and exhibition areas designed to connect heritage with contemporary creativity across the region.

During the private preview of MOWAA's inaugural exhibition *Nigeria Imaginary: Homecoming* in November 2025, visitors encountered a remarkable range of historical and artistic works, including Nok terracotta, Ife bronze heads, Igbo-Ukwu artefacts and the celebrated Owo leopard. These objects illustrate deep artistic traditions that span centuries and remind viewers that West African cultural production was complex, interconnected and regionally diverse long before colonial disruption.

Amid this moment of cultural celebration, however, controversy erupted. Protesters disrupted the event, asserting that the museum should instead be named a Benin Royal Museum and reflecting tensions over claims to cultural authority, restitution and custodianship of historic works that have been looted and dispersed abroad. Some of the unrest was tied to disputes over recently returned Benin Bronzes, which are not currently exhibited at MOWAA due to ongoing legal and custodial disagreements involving traditional authorities and government bodies.

Central to this debate is the question of identity and purpose. Some stakeholders have argued that the museum should be focused primarily on Benin royal art, but this approach overlooks a key fact: the works featured in MOWAA's early exhibitions and archive are drawn from across West Africa and are not limited to the Benin Kingdom alone. The Owo leopard, for example, comes from the historic Owo Kingdom, whose artistic traditions have often been overshadowed or misattributed within broader narratives of 'Benin art.'

For generations, many Owo artefacts were either

incorrectly attributed to the Benin Kingdom or subsumed under a generic label of Benin ivory and bronzes in Western collections. This erasure of distinct artistic identities has diminished recognition of Owo's unique contributions to the region's visual history. If MOWAA is to be true to its mission as a museum of West African art, it must ensure that Owo works and other historically significant traditions are properly researched, contextualised and credited for their origins. The museum's mandate is to reflect the full richness of the region's cultural tapestry, not to prioritise one lineage at the expense of others.

Retaining the name Museum of West African Art thus holds symbolic and practical importance. A broader institutional identity allows the museum to embrace a wide range of artistic practices, ancient, historical, and contemporary, from across the region, including but not limited to Benin, Owo, Ife, Nok, Igbo-Ukwu and beyond. A narrower title such as Benin Royal Museum could constrain the institution's scope, risk reinforcing the very silos that colonial histories helped create, and diminish opportunities for inclusive research, collaboration and cultural exchange.

Properly representing the Owo Kingdom's artistic legacy at MOWAA is not merely an act of historical correction; it is a step toward restoring respect for the diverse voices that make up West Africa's cultural heritage. As the museum develops its programmes, exhibitions and educational outreach, it has the opportunity to foster nuanced understandings of the region's past and to challenge longstanding misattributions that have impoverished global perspectives on African art.

In a world where museum narratives shape both national identity and international perceptions, MOWAA's commitment to a genuinely West African framework can foster unity rather than division. By foregrounding accurate attribution and contextual scholarship, and by honouring the distinct legacies of kingdoms such as Owo alongside Benin and others, the museum can embody its founding vision: celebrating the diversity, resilience and creativity of West African cultures on their own terms.




Owo Leopard Art



Owo Ivory Mask Pendant



A black and white photograph of a terracotta sculpture. The sculpture depicts a leopard in a pouncing or gnawing pose over a human leg. The leopard's body is covered in a pattern of circular indentations, representing spots. Its head is lowered, with its mouth open, gnawing on the human leg. The human leg is positioned horizontally, with the foot visible at the bottom. The entire sculpture is made of a dark, textured material, likely terracotta. The background is black.

A leopard gnawing on a human leg. The Olowo is often praised as Ekun (Leopard), and this terracotta may represent his awesome and formidable nature. Part of the excavated objects from Ugbo 'Laja, Owo, Nigeria. Photograph from Eyo and Willett (1980), Fig. 36, via The Kingdom of Owo, Rowland Abiodun.





**This Owo ivory mask pendant, carved in the 1800s, represents the head of a king. For many years, this artwork was wrongly attributed to Benin artefacts in Western museums.**





# Yorland Records: Championing Yoruba Culture Through Music

Yorland Records has been at the forefront of a musical renaissance, showcasing the richness and diversity of indigenous Yoruba sounds and dialects. The label has rolled out a series of releases that have captivated audiences both within Nigeria and across the globe, reaffirming the enduring appeal of Yoruba music and traditions.


At the heart of Yorland Records' mission is a desire to revive and elevate indigenous Yoruba music and dialects, placing them squarely at the forefront of Nigeria's entertainment landscape.

Indeed, Yoruba culture boasts a rich tapestry of traditions, ranging from vibrant musical rhythms to intricate linguistic nuances, that have captivated audiences across the globe. From the shores of Yorubaland in Nigeria and Benin Republic to far-flung destinations like Brazil and the United States, the influence of Yoruba culture continues to transcend geographical boundaries, a testament to its enduring beauty and allure.









# Exploring the Vibrant Cubism of Olalekan Odunbori: A Modern Reflection of African Life

Olalekan Odunbori emerges as a master, wielding the cubist style that weaves narratives drawn from the tapestry of Nigerian existence. With a bold and expressive brushstroke, Odunbori's canvases come alive, offering glimpses into the everyday lives of Nigerians with an unmistakable vibrancy and depth. Cubism, a style often associated with the pioneering works of Picasso and Braque, finds new resonance in Odunbori's hands. While its origins may lie in Europe, the roots of cubism delve deeper into the African aesthetic, where geometric forms and abstract representations have long been intrinsic to artistic expression. Odunbori seamlessly intertwines this heritage with contemporary themes, breathing new life into the genre.

Among his notable works, "The Bloom Series" stands out as a testament to Odunbori's prowess. In this captivating painting, a young boy, impeccably attired, delicately holds a flower. The juxtaposition of vibrant hues and intricate details creates a mesmerizing tableau, evoking a sense of innocence and wonder. The characters' faces seem imbued with a thirst for knowledge, inviting viewers to ponder the complexities of their surroundings.



"Dolce far Niente" transports us to a tranquil corner of African domesticity, where a woman reclines in leisure, savoring the sweetness of idleness. Clad in resplendent attire, with her hair adorned in shades of pink, she epitomizes the allure of carefree indulgence. Against a backdrop adorned with a painting, the scene encapsulates the essence of relaxation, prompting reflection on the pursuit of simple pleasures in a fast-paced world.

In "Tea Time," Odunbori demonstrates his mastery of simplicity and elegance. Against a backdrop of radiant yellow, a figure engages in the ritual of tea drinking, exuding a sense of quietude and introspection. The judicious use of primary colors imbues the scene with a harmonious balance, allowing the character to command attention without distraction.

What sets Odunbori apart is his fearless embrace of

color and form, infusing each composition with a palpable energy that captivates the senses. His works serve as a mirror to modern Africa, reflecting its dynamism, resilience, and unyielding spirit. Through his art, Odunbori invites us to embark on a journey of discovery, where every brushstroke tells a story and every canvas becomes a portal to a world both familiar and fantastical.

Olalekan Odunbori is a visionary artist whose cubist compositions transcend boundaries, bridging the past and present to illuminate the richness of African culture. With a keen eye for detail and an innate understanding of colour and form, he invites us to explore the complexities of human experience through the prism of his art. As we gaze upon his canvases, we are reminded of the enduring power of creativity to inspire, provoke, and ultimately, unite us in our shared humanity.



Dolce far Niente





The bloom series 1



The bloom series 2



Mini me and I



Tea time



# Colonial Classrooms and the Policing of Black Hair



One of the most enduring legacies of colonialism in Africa is not only found in political borders or economic structures, but in the education systems inherited by post-colonial states. In Nigeria, many school rules, disciplinary practices, and ideas of “proper appearance” are direct continuations of colonial education models designed by European missionaries and administrators. Among these is the strict regulation of Black hair, particularly the compulsory barbing of young Nigerian female students’ hair.

Colonial education systems in Nigeria were established largely by Christian missionaries during British rule. These schools were not neutral spaces of learning; they were tools of cultural transformation. European standards of cleanliness, order, and respectability were imposed on African bodies, languages, and identities. Black hair, in its natural state, was often described by missionaries as “untidy,” “bushy,” or “uncivilised.” This perception was rooted in racist beliefs that equated European physical features with superiority and African features with disorder.

As a result, African students, especially girls were required to cut their hair extremely low, sometimes to the skin. This was never a rule applied equally. In

Britain, the very same colonial powers allowed young girls and boys to wear their hair freely, long or short, so long as it was clean. The issue was never hygiene; it was racialised control.

Decades after independence, this colonial construct remains deeply embedded in Nigerian schools. Female students are still punished for having hair considered “too bushy,” “too full,” or “too natural.” Some schools equate natural Afro-textured hair with indiscipline, rebellion, or moral failure. This practice persists not because it serves educational development, but because colonial ideas were never fully dismantled from the school system.

The consequences for students are profound. For young girls, compulsory hair cutting often leads to humiliation, lowered self-esteem, and body shame. It teaches them, from a very early age, that their natural appearance is unacceptable and must be controlled to fit an imposed standard. This internalised rejection of Black identity can affect confidence, participation in school, and long-term self-worth.

Psychologically, these policies send a damaging message: that African hair must be suppressed to be respectable. Socially, they reinforce gendered control over girls’ bodies, disproportionately targeting female students while male students often face far less



scrutiny. Culturally, they contribute to the erasure of African aesthetics and self-expression in spaces meant to nurture growth and learning.

Allowing Nigerian female students and students across Sub-Saharan Africa to keep their hair, however long they choose, is not a threat to discipline or education. On the contrary, it affirms identity, boosts confidence, and fosters self-acceptance. When students feel respected and seen, they are more likely to engage positively with learning environments. Education should develop the mind, not police the body.

Globally, there is growing recognition that discrimination based on hair texture and style is a form of racial bias. African schools must also confront this reality. Maintaining hygiene and safety

does not require enforcing colonial beauty standards. Clean, well-kept hair can exist in many forms, including natural Afro hair, braids, twists, and locs.

Decolonising education means more than changing curricula; it requires dismantling inherited beliefs that still shape how African children are treated. The continued punishment of young Black girls for their natural hair is a reminder that colonialism did not end, it adapted.

Supporting Nigerian female students' right to wear their hair freely is an act of cultural reclamation, psychological protection, and educational justice. African classrooms should be spaces where children are taught to value who they are, not trained to reject themselves.



### Until the Next Page

Culture is not fixed. It moves, it questions, it resists, it re-imagines. It lives in the margins before it ever reaches the mainstream, and it is often born from voices that refuse to be silent.

Alternative Culture exists to document those voices, raw, evolving, unapologetic. Every story in these pages is a reminder that art is not just something we consume; it is something we become. It shapes how we see ourselves, how we challenge norms, and how we create space for new identities to emerge.

As you close this issue, we hope something stayed with you, a thought, a feeling, a disruption. Carry it forward. Support originality. Question trends. Celebrate difference. And remember, culture only moves forward when we dare to look beyond the obvious.

This is not the end. It's simply a pause between conversations.  
See you in the next issue.

Alternative Culture Magazine







