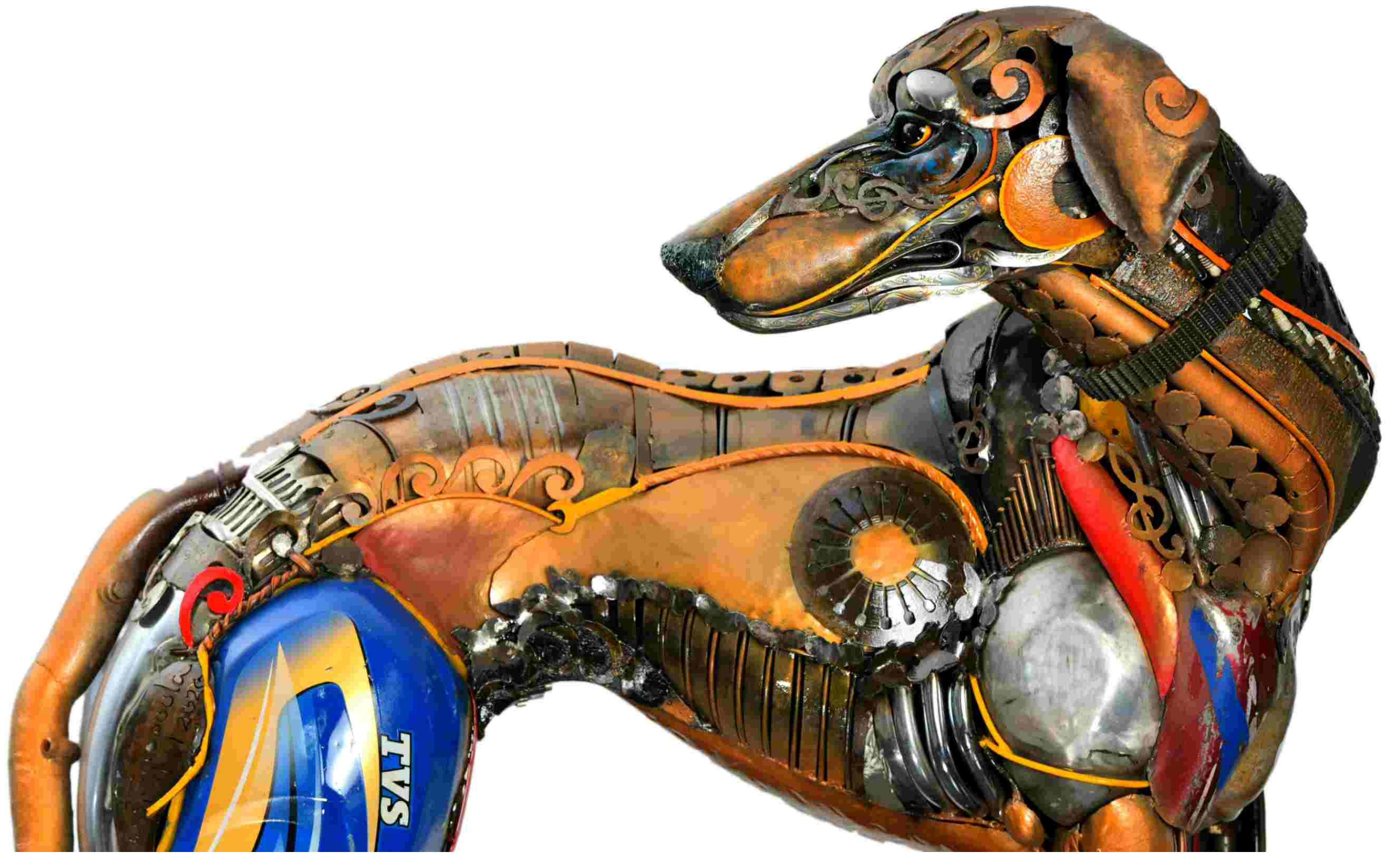


MÉTÀLÁ

a solo exhibition of 13 synergetic Metal Sculptures by

DOTUN POPOOLA





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at

THE GRANDEUR

Block 120, Plot 2, Bosun Adekoya Street,
Victoria Island, Lagos

19th - 30th DEC 2020



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On behalf of Art Pantheon Limited, it is my pleasure to present METALA, a solo exhibition by Dotun Popoola featuring 13 synergetic works.

It has been a very interesting journey working with Dotun and every step with a peculiar energy released. The pandemic, as experienced generally by the art world, dealt several blows but this energy kept us going and we stand strong.

The theme of the exhibition derives its name METALA from the central medium, metal and Yoruba numerical figure of 13 known as Metala. Significantly, the synergy in rhythmic strength between pieces of welded objects and numerical expression makes Metala a rare exhibition in the genre of metal art.

This show promises to renew your energy and projects amazing possibilities in recycling scraps, what we call useless and not useful being transformed into priceless luxury art.

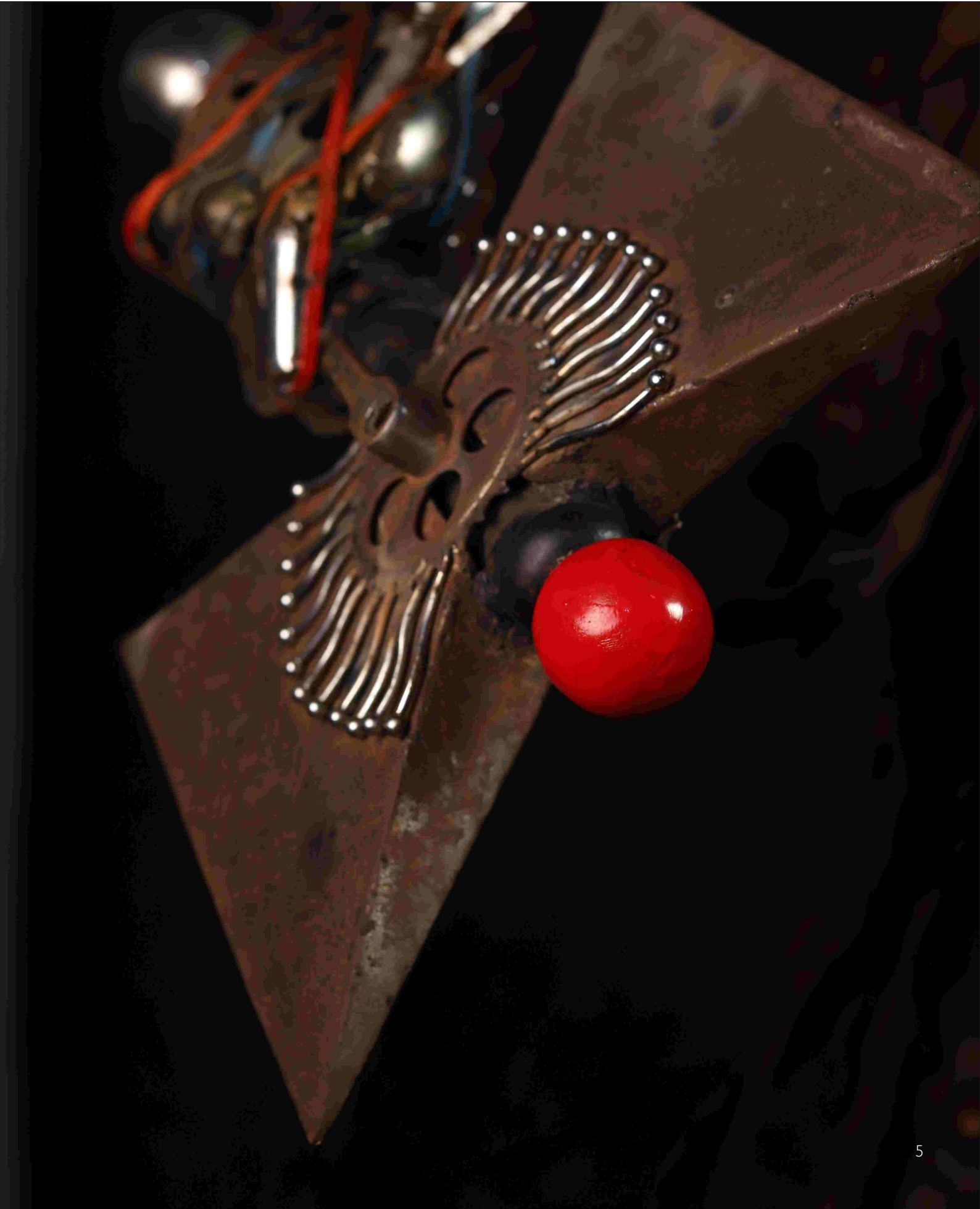
Art Pantheon is a team of professional and creative minds who believe strongly in Contemporary African Art. We specialize in exhibitions, documenting private and corporate collections and offer appraisals and valuations for insurance and market evaluations.

We are very grateful to the management for The Grandeur Hotel for their amazing support in making this show a reality. We would also like to thank Tiger Beer, Belvedere Vodka, The Luxury Reporter, TSA Contemporary Art Magazine, Faustino and George Osodi for their vital contributions to this exhibition.

Welcome to Metala.

Sincerely,

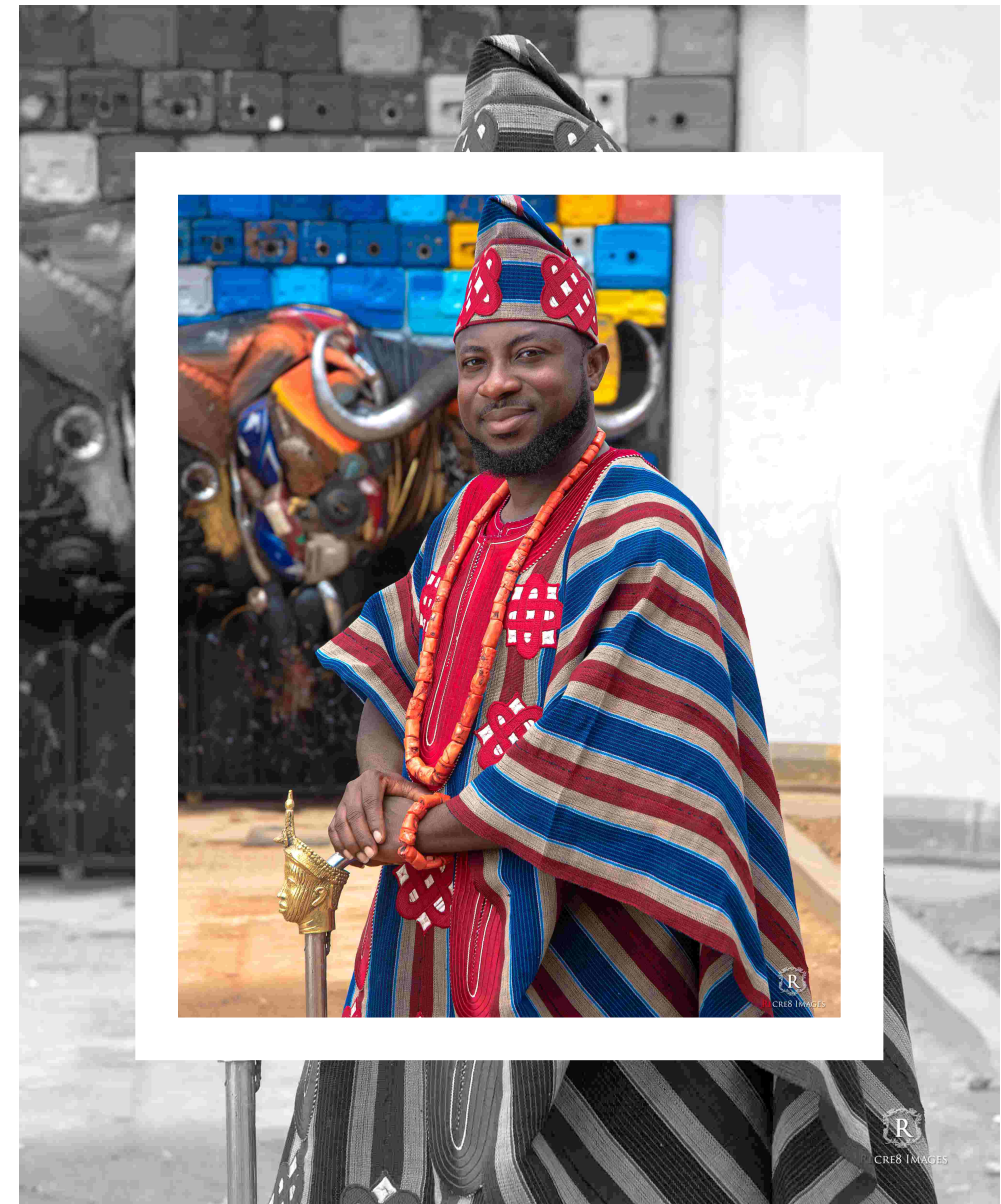
Nana Sonoiki
Art Pantheon Limited



DOTUN POPOOLA

A synergetic metal sculptor who has carved a niche for himself with his monumental metal sculptures. He had his first and second degree in Fine and Applied arts with a specialization in sculpture and painting respectively from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. In 2018, he was featured at the West Africa International Art Fair "ARTX Lagos". Dotun represented Nigeria at the 2019 Maiden Scrap Art Exhibition in Qatar, and Global Art Festival in Gujarat India in 2020. He has participated in twenty-nine (29) group, fourteen (14) joint, and five (5) solo exhibitions. He is passionate about touching lives through his artistic and leadership skills; turning trash to treasures, and rubbish to rubies.

Dotun facilitates art workshops for students, professionals, NGOs, healthcare institutions, hospices, orphanage homes, rehabilitation centers and schools locally and internationally. Dotun has equally executed several monumental sculptures and large murals both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. He continues to provide landmark mentoring opportunities for Professional development for local and International artists in his studio in Ile-Ife, South-West Nigeria. His Immense contribution to the growth of Art globally has been featured in over 100 publications both locally and internationally. This includes the New York Times, Washington Time, BBC, CNN Africa, BBC pidgin, Reuters, Aljazeera and Channels Television, to mention but a few.



ABOUT ART PANTHEON

Art Pantheon is a team of professional and creative minds who believe strongly in African Art. Art Pantheon specialize in exhibitions, documenting private and corporate collections and offers appraisals and valuations for insurance and market evaluations.

We also offer Art maintenance for private and corporate collections as well as Art advisory helping to guide young collectors in building a strong and economically viable collection.

Art Pantheon has carved a niche in Art packaging and logistics and offer a world class restoration services.

Art Pantheon assists corporations in discovering value in the art market. The art market is constantly growing and we are. As the contemporary market in Africa is growing, more and more collectors are looking to find solid investments and this is our mission.



Nnaemeka Alfred Ugochukwu Achebe CFR,mni

Obi of Onitsha
(Agbogidi)

09 December, 2020

Nana Sonoiki,
Art Pantheon,
c/o The Grandeur,
Block 120, Plot 2, Bosun Adekoya Street,
Victoria Island, Lagos.

Dear Nana,

Goodwill Message

Congratulations on your maiden exhibition under the banner of Art Pantheon on 19 December, 2020. I appreciate how hard you have worked for this exhibition in your usual quest for the highest standards. I trust that this opener with the amazing metal sculptures by 'Dotun Popoola will reward your painstaking efforts.

I am sorry that I am unable to attend the opening ceremony, as I had promised, due to the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. Never mind, there is consolation as we look to future impressive opportunities.

I wish you a most successful event.

Best regards,

Nnaemeka Achebe
(Agbogidi)

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My art forms rely on junk such as motorcycle tanks, brake pads, car struts, bolt and nuts, electric generator parts, etc., which have become the visible elements of infrastructural deficiency /decay in Nigeria. These scraps that have littered our environment have since become my tool of creative expression in writing the story of our dear Nation, Nigeria. A glimpse on my realistic synergetic sculptures gives a feel of life after death. These scrap metals have come alive in forms of beastly creatures, domestic and wild animals, and human forms. Often times, I select colourful scraps with special attention to their colour symbolism but sometimes I deliberately add Color to the finished product to beautify and partially conceal the ugly sides of these scrap metals. My sculptures also celebrate anatomical excellence, and with breaths of life.

My recycled metal scrap sculptures have presented me the opportunity to become a social commentator. My body of works addresses the issue of waste management and conservation, infrastructural decay, and the need to repurpose and recycle the large army of wastes that make our environment unsightly and which threaten the ecosystem.

My artistic practice is based on a personal philosophy that art should be explored as an agent of change, and as a tool for socio-cultural review, reengineering and as a form of protest against environmental decadence and degradation.



F O R E W O R D

When metal evokes dread, wonder, comfort and fantasy

Dotun Popoola's sculptures remind me of the great artist, Leonardo da Vinci and his obsession with machines. Some of his numerous and famous ones are "Flying machines", "Armoured car", "Parachute", "Weapons of war", these are just a few among several others. In Europe, about 1900s Pablo Picasso created the work he titled, "Guitar". The work was made of an assemblage of sheet metal and wire. We also recall Duchamp's "Readymade" which is a whole bicycle wheel mounted on a stool. Bauhaus was a school of art founded by the German architect, Walter Gropius in 1919. The philosophy of the school sought to combine art, design and craft while embracing industrial technology. A classical example of the product of Bauhaus is a work titled, "Light Space Modular" by Laszlo Moholy Nagy (1895-1946). The work is a kinetic sculpture made of a combination of steel, electric motor, plastic and wood. Dada also engaged with different kinds of materials, "The Spirit of Our Time" by Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971) is perhaps one of the most popular works of this movement. Most recently the work of the A.I. artist, Refik Anadol, whose use of high tech and collaboration with several scientists and technologists is reference to the spirit of machines and technology. There is also the simple to complex works of kinetic artist, David C. Roy that also come to mind. The reference to these western artists is to build a necessary connection with the pure metallic works of Popoola, which are uniquely Dotunistic. The difference between these artists' engagement with metal as a medium and the works that emerge from their studios could be of interesting historical research. But my interest is essentially focused on the power of visual stimulus and connections that Popoola's works instigate; especially his interest is using scrap metals as waste to create his works of metallic wonder. Artists have always been fascinated with products of technology; and their response have always left us with creations that speak directly and deeply to our humanity and history. It is in the light of this stimulus that the exhibition of Popoola titled; "METALA" becomes the focus of this essay. Metala packs complex significations. Popoola explains that "METALA" is a Yoruba word that means thirteen. Thirteen works will be on show. Meta means three in Yoruba, which he said reference the Trinity in the Christian faith. Metala without "a", reference the artist's family heritage and connection with metal. His forefather, grandfather and father have worked with metal and machines as blacksmiths, farmers, hunters and automobile engineer. This rich family connection with metal gave Popoola visions of unimaginable possibilities made possible. From his creative chamber anatomically detailed sculptures in their most ambitious dimensions and excellent finishing are presented. Metala therefore becomes referential metaphors of wonder and fantasy.

Dotun Popoola is a graduate of the Ife School; historic city of Ile Ife known as one of the best centres of metal sculpture in Nigeria (the others are Benin and Igbo-Ukwu). The bronze head is known to represent Oni Obalufon II and other exquisitely naturalistic portraits of the ancient Ile-Ife Kingdom that continues to confound Western cultural bias on the quality of African art and culture. These are the artistic heritage that forms the context of his artistic adventures.

Popoola sees himself as an agent of change, "a tool of social review". Therefore, in his work, he sees the opportunity to address perhaps one of the world's most threatening "environmental decadence" and waste management. When he source for scrap metals and piles them into mountains, he is cleaning, clearing and depleting his environment of hard waste in the first place. These scrap metals commence their journey into a highly heated furnace of creative incubators. Here the hard metals are first melted aesthetically to produce human figures, animals and objects of the artist's fancy. While the figures and animals connect us with the complexity of our physical world, the materials used only remotely connect us with the environmental wastes that the modern world is generating. The artists observed, "My body of works has addressed the issue of waste management and conservation, infrastructural decay, and the need to repurpose and reuse the large mountains of wastes that render our environment unhealthy, ugly and a threat to the ecosystem. My goal, then and now, is aimed at creating a luxury brand from discarded materials." Only an artist could imagine and realise a hopeless situation such as this. I pursued my quest to understand how this metallic creator goes about his work and asked him a few questions and he responded as follows:



Tell us your Creative process

My creative process sometimes is spontaneous delivery of what comes from my mind. Whenever I feel like making any piece I don't wait to finish the thought process, I just start, and in the midst of trying to give the work my best, then I make further research of the subject matter. I mostly start my works with sketches on paper, followed by clay modelling of a miniature piece, which is then transferred to a larger piece of assembled scraps. I constantly do an anatomy study of different species of animals and pay attention to their structural differences.

What idea started you on this path?

I did my first degree in sculpture and my masters in painting at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife; but after the formal training, I was not satisfied with what I have learnt in the formal school, then I went for further training in different welders' shop in Lagos and the United States, the training opened my eyes to different opportunities in scrap metal art and since then I have been creating monumental works that scare me. I also did a market survey of trending styles, and approach to welded metal art in Nigeria and I saw a vacuum that I needed to fill. In summary, I was in serious search for identity and originality and I am glad I found it.

How do you see metal as a material?

I see metal the way a writer sees pen and paper that I could use to write the story of my life and the tale of my ancestors. I see metal as a tool to rewrite many wrongs in our society, metal has given me the opportunity to translate and transform ugliness into beauty. By extension, I see metal just the way a fashion designer sees fabrics.

What do you want us to see when we view your complex, beautiful and often-frightful works?

I want people to see hope, life and a new beginning, I want people to see beauty from ashes, I want you to see rubies from rubbish, I want to tell a story of the dry bones that rose again, (I guess he is making reference to the Ezekiel 37:1-11), and the tale of a rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone (This is a term used in the Bible to reference Christ as the critical part of the life of human beings, here used analogously to a portion of a building that has structural significance). My body of works is said to have cured depression and I so much believe it heals me too."

We have passed the cliché of "art for art sake" if we accept Popoola's deposition of the effect his works has his viewers. I have always also shared the conviction that art serves such emotional values as addressing matters of the heart and soul of humans, and to this extent, it could not be said it served its own sake.

Do you have artist statement for this show?

My artistic practice is based on a personal philosophy that art should be explored as an agent of change, and as a tool of social review, reengineering and protest against environmental decadence. My body of works has addressed the issue of waste management and conservation, infrastructural decay, and the need to repurpose and reuse the large army of wastes that make our environment unsightly and threaten the ecosystem. My goal, then and now, is aimed at creating a luxury brand from discarded materials.

I am drawn to meditate on three different works in this show:

The famous wooden comb, which is popular in eastern and western Nigeria, inspired the work titled, "Ooya". (It is interesting that Yusuf Grillo has a set of screens, which he said were inspired by Ibibio's in eastern Nigeria). The sculpture assumes a standing female figure with many sharp-pointed legs held to the ground. The face is so captivating with an expression of multiple emotional expressions beckoning the viewer's attention. In this work as in others in this show, the artist used different metals, and machine parts such as chains, plugs, discs, plates, rods and many others to create his figures. "Ooya" could be a vulnerable young female child abandoned. The perplexed facial expression, in my opinion, captures the gender crisis in our modern societies.

"Shango" is another exhibit that is made up of a gold face, colourful burst and expressing muscle and strength of the personality. From the waist down covering the feet is a blade-like costume made up of exquisitely constructed miniature elephants. In this sculpture, Popoola take-on a fearful legendry figure of Yoruba mythology and subject it to contemporary interpretation where his creative freedom takes him through any possible traditional canons. His "Shango" becomes a hybrid representation, reinterpretation offered through a modernist narrative.

The "Saluki Dog" betrays the artist's love for this universal human companion. Consider the almost perfect anatomy of the breed. The graceful treatment of the animal, and you could see it as pet and watchdog, the smooth surface finish, in warm colours transforms "Saluki Dog" from the animal into a treasure of the heart. Without asking Popoola, it is possible to see that the work was created with his heart rather than his hands.

Words are indeed inadequate to capture the vision, artistic complexity and finish that this artist presents to us. The possibilities that the sculptures evoke, is left to the viewer's imagination.

Conclusion

Popoola's impressive artistic bio is evidence of his devotion to his convictions, obsession, tenacity, consistency and the creative energy he pours in his work. It also shows the influence and value of nature and nurture. This concentrated engagement with hard objects, such as metal, expose a personality that is brave, bold, sensitive and extremely adventurous with the physical world, yet his artistic language also betrays a spirituality that is deeply embedded with his creative process.

How can we extract humanity in and from the sculptures of Popoola? Metal!

His sculptures are immediately complex, awesome, intimidating, frightening. Yet, he is able to make them beautiful by the way the surfaces are treated with such delicateness of detail and smoothness to create a visual dialogue that mixes love and hatred, pain and healing, fear and assurance, even death and life. The visual strategy of surface quality, movement, formal complexity and composition are some of the aesthetic techniques he employs to give humanity to his works. Popoola's enigmatic METALA presents us with the possibilities of a refreshing experience of our relationship with machines and technology, waste and reclamation. A deeper contemplation of his sculptures also shows how different objects (people) can be brought together to form a harmonious entity. In our search for nationhood as a country I think that it is possible to find some lessons in METALA.

Mètálá:

Dotun Popoola's Numeral Riddle in Visual Revelation

Kehinde Adepegba

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Ikorodu*

Introduction

Mètálá is a Yorùbá word, which translates as 'thirteen (13)'. This is a revelatory mantra that Dotun Popoola wants us to interact with and interrogate in the course of viewing his 6th solo exhibition. In the innermost contemplation of the artist, he was only negotiating with a number that is convenient for a decent show. While his intuitive wave is charged at the 'metal' in the 'Mètál-á', Dotun has simply thrown up a volume that encapsulates his life and art that needed to be deciphered.

Mètálá in the Yorùbá number system is méta-le-mewàá (3+10=13). It is a number that typifies the monthly calendar of the people before the now widely accepted Gregorian calendar. This is so, since the Yorùbá considered 13 lunar months to be a year. Hence when the moon is sighted, they say: osù ye. This signifies that a Yoruba month (osù) contains only 28 days summing up to 364 days per year when multiplied by 13. It is not a mere coincidence that December 19, the kick-off date of this show falls within the 13th lunar month of the year 2020.

Despite the global oddities and absurdities thrown at us by the year 2020, Dotun reintroduces us to the atavistic basics where attention is paid to the instructive meaning, realistic implication and practical application of number system to life, existence, creativity and art. Mètálá (13) is not just a number as presented hereunder.

Mètálá as Metamorphosis

Dotun's prolificacy in this brand of artistic production as revealed by this theme relates to the female reproductive power symbolised by their 13 menstrual circles of 28 days per circle, which is in tandem with the lunar month. In this case, Mètálá as metamorphosis does represent a transformative prowess and process that ensure uninterrupted circles of productivity and renewal. There is usually a progressive striking change and development in the corporeal and qualitative characteristics of his works. This metamorphosis is exemplified in these 13 works.

Mètálá as Metaphysics

Number 13 is first an indication of progress from one operational realm to another and secondly an allegory of the death of a struggling period and new beginnings or a very important change towards newness. This newness is found in the source energy in line with 'Terah' (number 13) in the Hindi religion, which means everything belongs to God, the magnificent Creator. His ability to continuously tap from this divine Source energy is why he advances creatively. Besides, for those who care about angelic ministry, there is an Angel Number 13, as the combination of numbers 1 and 3. As it affect Dotun, it is a precursor from his angels that he is connected to the ascended masters² and their ability to help in the manifestation of his ingenious desires.

¹Hindi is one of India's multiple languages. This reference becomes necessary, as he has also been influenced by the India culture when he travelled there recently.

²Dotun forebears in Abeokuta, were specialists in metal works at a small scale as blacksmith (àgbèdè) and metal smith (asúde).

Mètálá as metallurgy

I have observed closely the typology of metals that found their way into Dotun's studio. Dotun Popoola's metal collection processes and the modes and methods of their uses have exposed him to 13 types of metals. These 13 metals are steel, iron, copper, brass, zinc, bronze, tin, lead, magnesium, aluminum, titanium, cobalt and silicon. I categorise his collected metal scraps into 13 broad groups: wheels, chains, springs, musical instruments, rollers, balls, ball joints, pipes, plates, tanks, bolts and nuts, kitchen utensils, and rods. Now, he understands the chemical behaviours of metallic elements and alloys of these various metals and scraps. Thus he manipulates them to his own advantage, taking them through 13 procedural stages which are: selection, collection, separation, assemblage, cutting, tracing, welding, grinding, spraying, sandblasting, application of antirust clear coat, patina, burnishing and exhibition.

Mètálá as Metaphor

Dotun informs³ that Mètálá in his reflection reveals how 'metal' and 'la a' combines to mean 'metal flourishes him'. No doubt, he has harvested from the flood of blessings from his furrow into synergetic hybrid metal art, but his expression of this truism only affirms how he has risen to the occasion of challenging the possible disparaging statements by his traducers: Mètálá e kò tó be The production of 13 works for this show is a metaphor of completeness and fulfilment. The works speak volumes about man and his environment- okere gorí irókò, Ojú ode dá II and Sànngó; beauty in the face of challenges- Arewà, Òòyà, Eye n korin; labour and productivity- sewing machine, Àkókó, King fisher and Alántakùn; culture as idiom- Èyo and Ìjàpá àti Okere; and animal as friends- Saluki dog and Portrait of Irinola.



³Oral interview with Dotun Popoola on Thursday, 10th December 2020 in his Studio at Ile-Ife.

Dotun Popoola in *Métàlá* has not only treated us to a visual metalanguage of number, but opens us up to assimilate the energetic proportions of his creative metal works. I reason that the success of the artist in this journey of creativity is also as a result of his employment of metalokan (trinity) principle of engaging judiciously the trio of time, space and matter with his body, soul and spirit. This he achieves by combining painting and graphic elements into his sculptures. In this spirit of this trinity, find below the analysis of three the works on show: *Zaluki*, *Okere gorí ìròkò*, *Ojú Ode dá II* and *Alántakùn*.

Saluki

Saluki is a species of dog commonly found in the Middle East and some parts of the West. It hunts primarily by sight rather than scent and was once used by the nomadic tribes to run down game animals. Dotun was attracted to this dog by its typical deep-chested and long-legged anatomy, which makes the dog elegant in beauty.

Saluki accentuates the relationship that man has with domestic animals and their social symbolism as man's ageless companions. For example: *Ajá ìwòyí ló mọ ehoro ìwòyí lè* (The dog of this time is right for hunting the rabbit of the time), teaches that the challenge of a time requires the solution of such a time; *'Alá tí ajá bá lá, inú ajá lo gbé'* (dog does not reveal its dreams), informs that you don't disclose our vision until it is accomplished because of vision-killers, and *'Ti ajá kò bá rí, kì í gbó'* (a dog does not bark without a reason)- if there is no cause, there is no effect. Dotun Popoola succeeds in bringing to bear by this stupendous artwork, the inseparable relationship between man and animal.

Okore gorí ìròkò, *Ojú Ode dá* (The squirrel climbs atop the Iroko tree, the game hunter becomes helpless) A squirrel is an animal which climbs from one tree to the other effortlessly, and from one level to another. It is obvious that the Iroko is one of the tallest trees found in the forest. Game hunters (ode) do find squirrel to be very smart and the try very hard to shoot at it before ascending the heights of the trees. When this happens, the Yoruba conclude, *Ojú Ode dá* (meaning: the game hunter becomes helpless). The work captures game hunter and his dog wandering feeble in the bush having roamed around without a success. This is revealed by how the artist attached pieces of leaves to the figures, yet there is a small squirrel attached to the barrel of the Hunter's gun indicating that the squirrel appears to be close but far from the reach of the hunter.

The work, which is intricately rendered, teaches about the proper use of instinct to our advantage in times of needs. The squirrel is depicted as attractive yet unreachable because of his survival instincts, and to be conscious of the fact that you don't have all our wishes all the time. This is one way Dotun uses Yoruba proverbs and philosophical thoughts to converse compelling socio-cultural messages.

Alántakùn (spider)

Alantakun is depicted as a victor whose dragnet has captured some preys. The elegant spider is portrayed as an imposing insect that overpowers his prey through its woven mesh. This seemingly simple magnetic way of catching other insects for food was enlarged realistically to communicate some truths to the audience. Different preys are depicted struggling as they move outwards yet remain in the stranglehold of the spider.

¹ Ìròkò is African teak or swamp mahogany- its botanical name is *chlorophora excels* (Dictionary of Yorùbá Language (2002), Ibadan: University Press Plc. i

The work takes into account how a man's gift can serve as a source of getting a decent livelihood. Likewise, it teaches us to know that God has given everyone a means of survival in this bionetwork and that a man's survival strategy may pose a danger to another. The artist is teaching that one should be watchful in order not to fall into the enemies' trap that may appear attractive..

Conclusion

Dotun, who has crossed boundaries given the numbers of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images he had created in the last couples of years, has shown his sublime skills and creative ability to combine irregular scraps of metal to create master pieces. The works on show divulge Dotun Popoola's ability to translate the themes. He uses and reuses metals and metal scraps in variety of ways respectively, while they are garnished with audacious colour impressions that speak volumes in visual riddles.

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Oral interview with Dotun Popoola on Thursday 10th December 2020, in his Studio at Ile-Ife.

Mystery of Metal-a-rt

Metal-a-rt is a coinage from two languages; Yoruba and English. Metal-a-rt is a combination of three words; metal, métàlá (thirteen in Yoruba language) and art. The practical, aesthetic and meaningful connection between the three words can only be revealed in the midst of thirteen awesome metallic artistries from the forge of the alchemist of waste metal; Dotun Popoola. The works in the present offering are strong expressions and ideas cast in metal, formed in awesome sizes and finished in attractive complimentary colours. The artist's training in painting and deep love for music pervade the finishing and the bits from the entrails of musical instruments which form the components of many of the works. Trying to identify the roots of these components absorb the mind into levels of aesthetic mysteries. After arriving from the clouds of aesthetic heights, reality brings to the fore; the puzzle of métàlá.

In many western cultures, the number 13 is considered an unlucky number. Many high-rise buildings have no thirteenth floor; hotels, hospitals, houses avoid using number 13 on rooms or gates. Research has shown that ten percent of people living in the United States of America have this phobia. This phobia was termed triskaldekaphobia in 1910 by a psychologist (Faragher, 2018). Many authors and playwrights have built on this phobia and smiled to the banks after. Historically, the reason and origin of the phobia is lost in mythical past except for theories which try to explain the reason behind the phobias. One of the most common theory is that Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus Christ was the thirteenth guest at the last supper (Maranzani, 2013; Faragher, 2018).

Dotun brings the number thirteen home and strips it of all superstitions and mysticism and clad it in African metallic creativity sourced from the mass grave of scrap metals. Through casting, cutting, welding and painting, dead and rusted metals are resurrected to communicate and express ideas in symbolic, simple or complex forms that are creatively worked out in ways that never fail to enchant the viewers' aesthetic spirit into a desirable and mesmerizing captivity. Two areas of fertile grounds for Dotun's ideas stand out; culture and nature.

The Èyò festival is a Lagos Island cultural affair which originated from the belief that the departing soul or spirit of the king or chief in the land must be ushered ceremoniously into the ancestral world. Also known as Adámú Òrìsà, it has since become a colourful carnival and tourist attraction. Simple composition through positioning of forms and colours re-enacts the frills and thrills of the carnival in Èyò Adímú Òrìsà. Èyò Adímú is the leader masquerade which must come out before the festival becomes officially open. Beyond the simple arrangement lies the meticulous joining of metal butterfly motifs to form the dress via laborious, cutting, setting and welding. This use of motifs from nature is common to many of Dotun's work; it has become his logo.

Against the simplicity of arrangement in Èyò Adímú Òrìsà is the intricate complexities in the human forms of Sàngo and Òkéré gun orí irókò, ojú odé dá (the squirrel has climbed the irókò tree and the hunter is soberly dejected). The strong looking, massive and muscularly framed Sàngó is befittingly matched with a face full of character (the face was achieved via bronze casting) on a giant body with a strong active stance and paraphernalia of sword, axe (symbol of Sango) and skirt – with each being an art piece on its own. A comic interpretation is given to the act of Òkéré climbing the irókò tree. Audacity is added to freedom in placing the squirrel on the butt of the hunter's gun while he is lost in his regret for missing the game even with his designer guns, trap and a powerful dog. The face and hands of the hunter are also achieved via bronze casting. Common to the two works is the richness in the diversity of found metal objects that are composed together to achieve the high realism in the figures.

Arewà (which means the beautiful) is a profile of a lady. It is less complex in constituents and arrangement but bounteous in aesthetics and commanding in size. Red roses adorn her dramatic and beautiful hair. Her beauty is so strongly attractive that butterflies, bees and other insects are attracted. The attracted insects are symbolic of male admirers who never fail to notice the arrival of beauty.

Nature has always fascinated Dotun. Many of his great works that brought him good remuneration and name were depictions of animals. In this exhibition, Saluki Dog, King Fisher, Alánakùn, Tale of a Squirrel and Tortoise, Portrait of Ìrìnlá, Wood Pecker and Eyenkorin are creative depictions of animals which bring out their beauty and dynamism. Of all the animals depicted in this exhibition, the Saluki Dog stands out with pose and beauty, a clear reflection of the amount of labour and the height of craftsmanship deployed to bring out the peculiar physical features of the internationally recognized royal breed. The importance given to animals in this exhibition is an indirect message from the artist that conservation of nature is absolutely necessary not only for aesthetic reasons but for human survival as well.

Conservation aside, the animal theme is also employed to sink some messages and lessons into our subconscious minds through symbolism. The title, *Eyenkorin* is actually stimulated by the name of a town, *Eyenkorin* in Ilorin, Kwara State. Formally, the name of the town was *Eyensunkún* (bird is crying) whereas, *Eyenkorin* means 'bird is singing' which was actually a name given because the people of the town felt the old name brought negative image. The old name was actually given by predecessors of the town because there used to be many trees in the area and birds were singing on them (Tribune, 2015).

Eyenkorin can be further seen as a symbolic ode to a legendary flutist and entertainer, Tee Mac Omatshola Isei popularly known as Tee Mac who started his deep love affair with the flute from the age of seven and was formally trained in music and economics (Olaode, 2018). The flute on which the bird is standing is the same type that has brought fame to Tee Mac in the Nigerian music scene and taken him to different parts of the world. The globe becomes symbolized by the spherical shape under the standing bird whose feathers also includes parts of the flute; meaning that the bird (Tee Mac) is

biologically and spiritually synchronized with the flute. The globe under the bird's feet can be interpreted to mean the world is Tee Mac's domain. Dotun is preaching the message that your talent should be trained and held firmly because in a matter of time, it will bring the world to your feet.

Creative ideas do not only emanate from within the artist, sometimes it is stimulated by natural environment. This happens in many cases through contact with scenes or objects of interest that stimulate the subconscious into a spiritual dialogue with nature. In such cases, it appears that the object or medium communicates how to bring out messages from it or wrest aesthetics out of it by chance or deliberate action. Such is the case with *Tale of a Squirrel and Tortoise*, a mixed media of wood and metal which started from a found piece of wood. By the time the wood became a table with four metals legs, the Tortoise came out and the remaining part of the wood revealed the map of Africa without any modeling. The work is based on a story of the Tortoise who won the race by tricking the Squirrel into sleeping in the middle of a race. The mixed media *Wood Pecker* is not different. It started with the discovery of the wood with the shape suggesting a nest.

Nature is not the only stimulant for creativity, manmade objects also suggest aesthetic possibilities. Their forms and texture suggest expressions which come out from the sculptor's hammer. This is the case with *Òdòyà* (Yoruba word for hair comb) which is transformed into a female beauty. *Sewing Machine* is another example of an object transformed into a piece of creative expression.

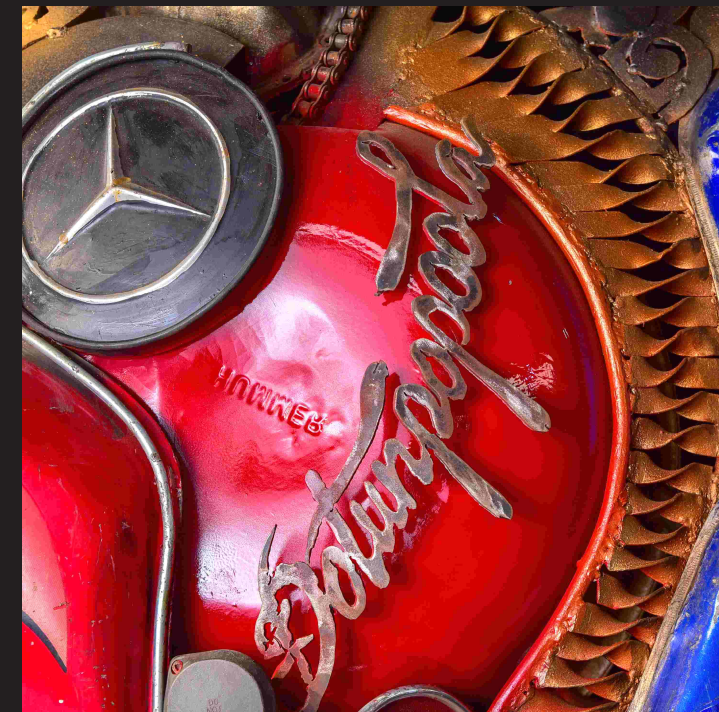
The unlucky number thirteen has transported down into Africa and landed in Dotun Popoola's studio where it became ripped of its bad luck with the use of metal in thirteen different creative works, transforming into *métàlá*. This is the narrative mystery of metal-a-rt, thirteen is just a number, and a lucky one indeed.

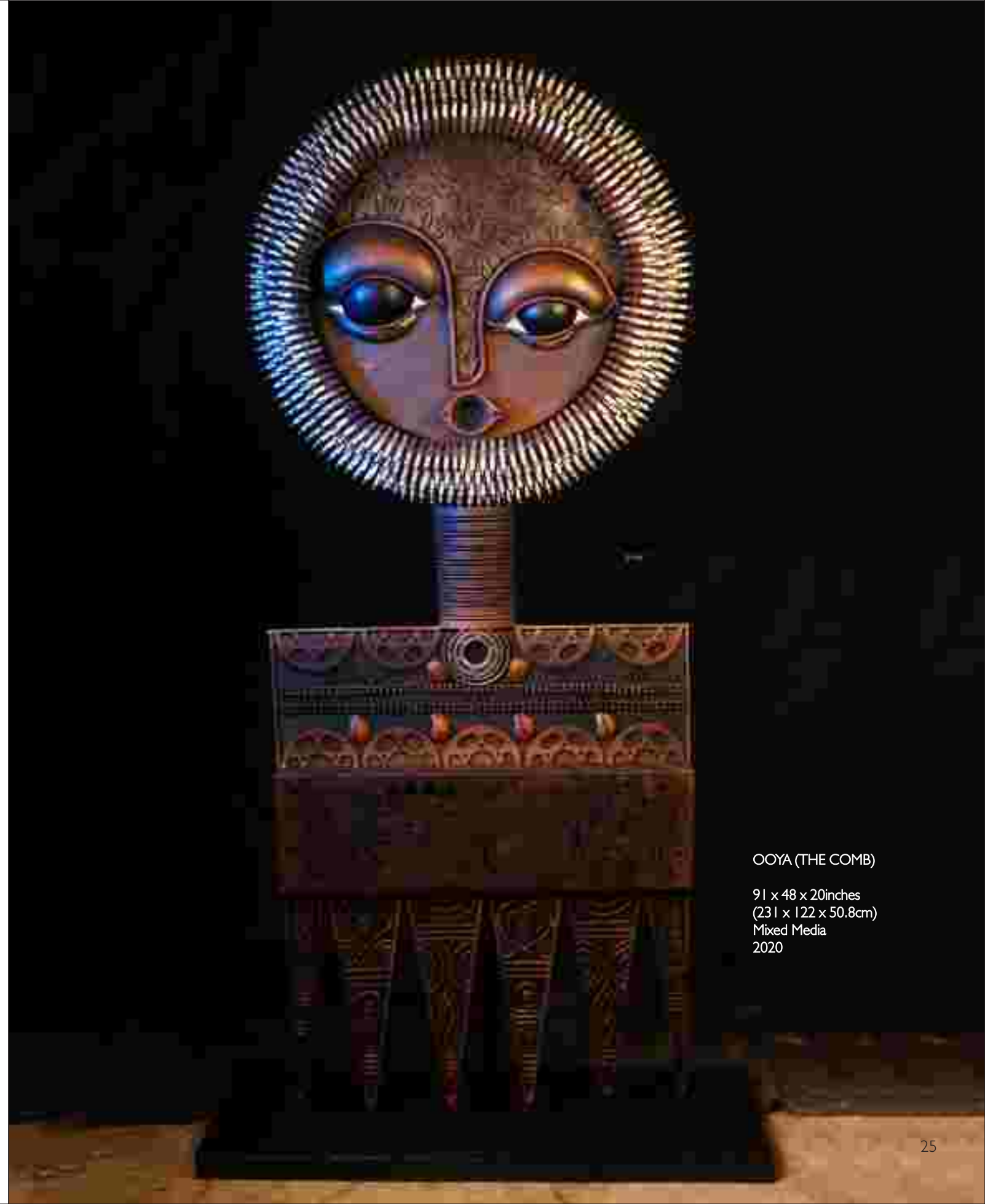
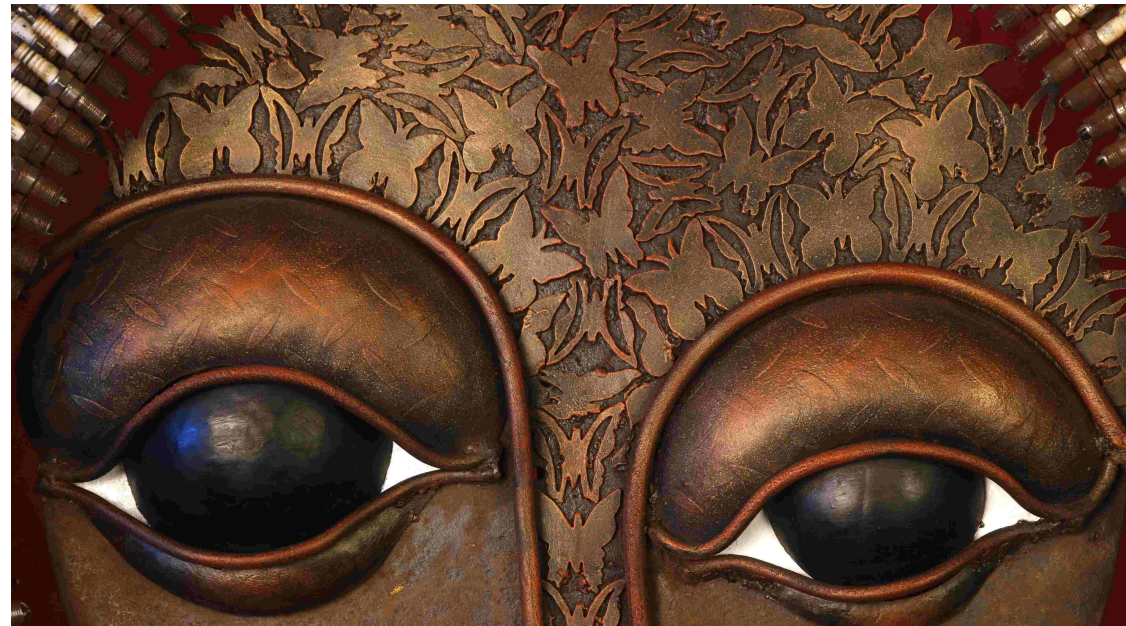
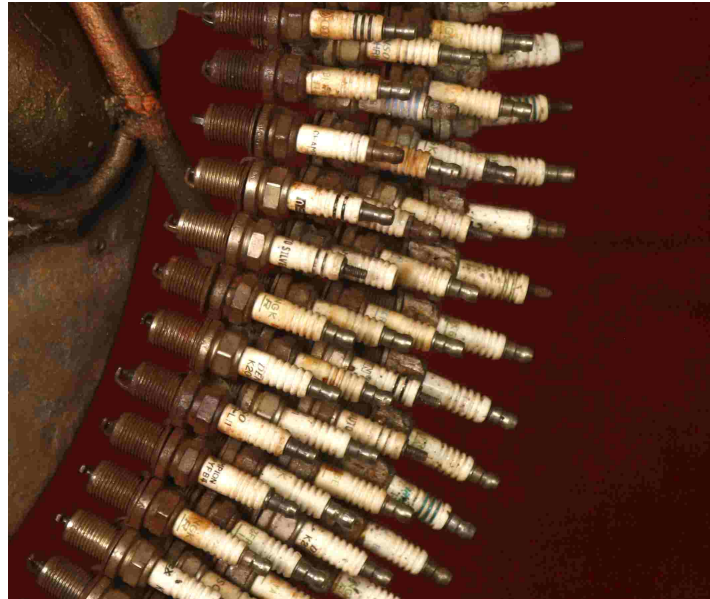
AJIBOYE Olusegun Jide (M. F. A., Ph. D)

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Obafemi Awolowo University*

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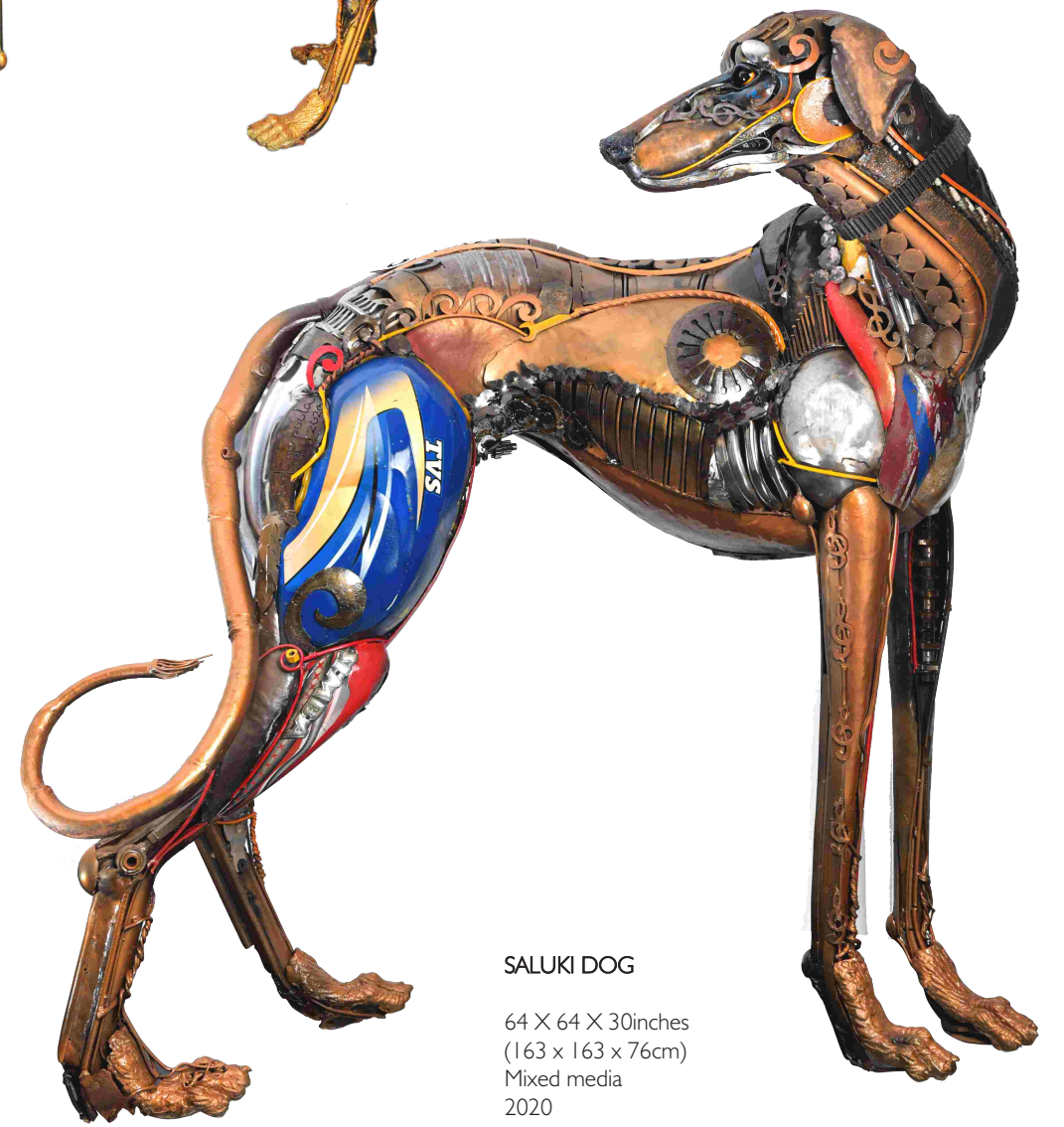
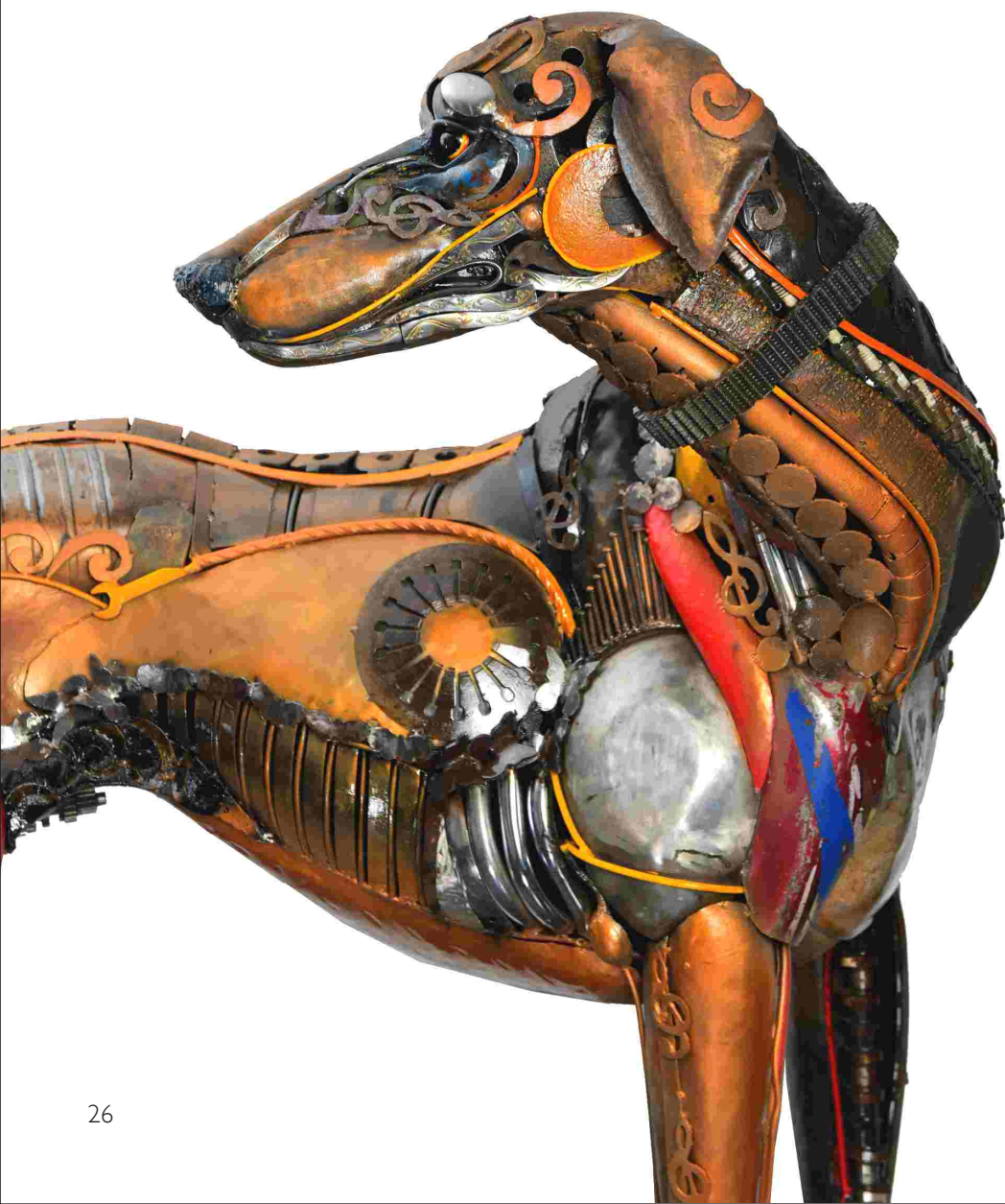
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OOYA (THE COMB)

91 x 48 x 20 inches
(231 x 122 x 50.8 cm)
Mixed Media
2020



SALUKI DOG

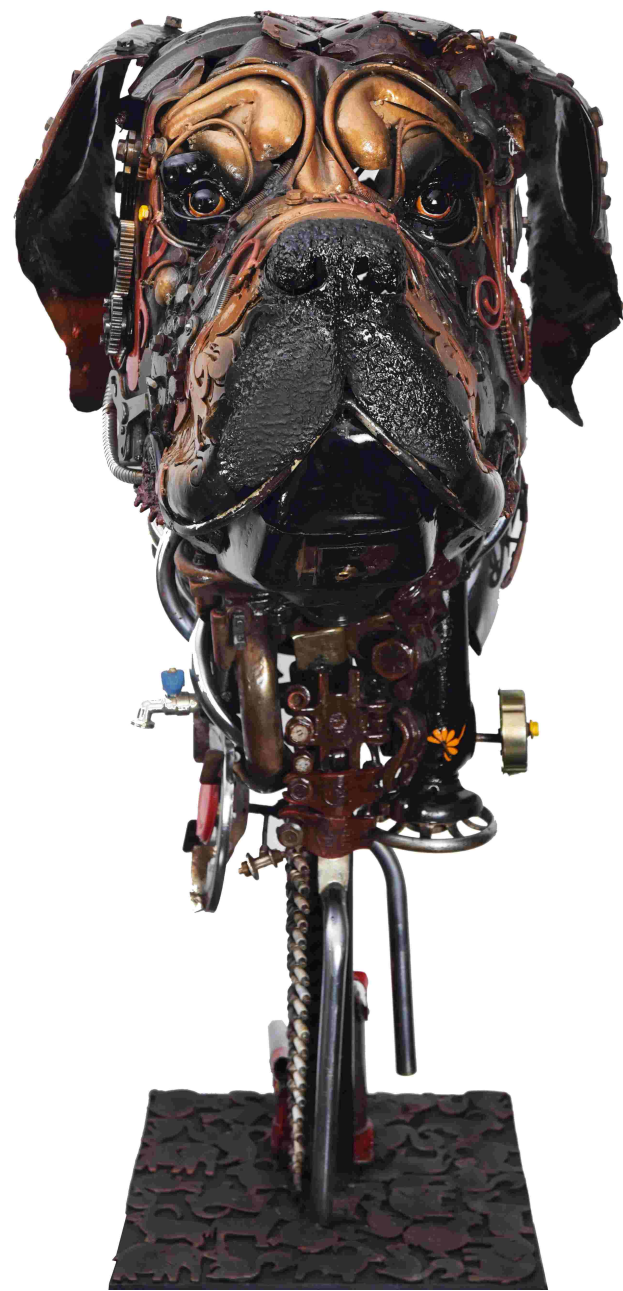
64 X 64 X 30inches
(163 x 163 x 76cm)
Mixed media
2020



ILE OLUJI BULL

Mixed media
2019-2020





PORTRAIT OF IRINOLA

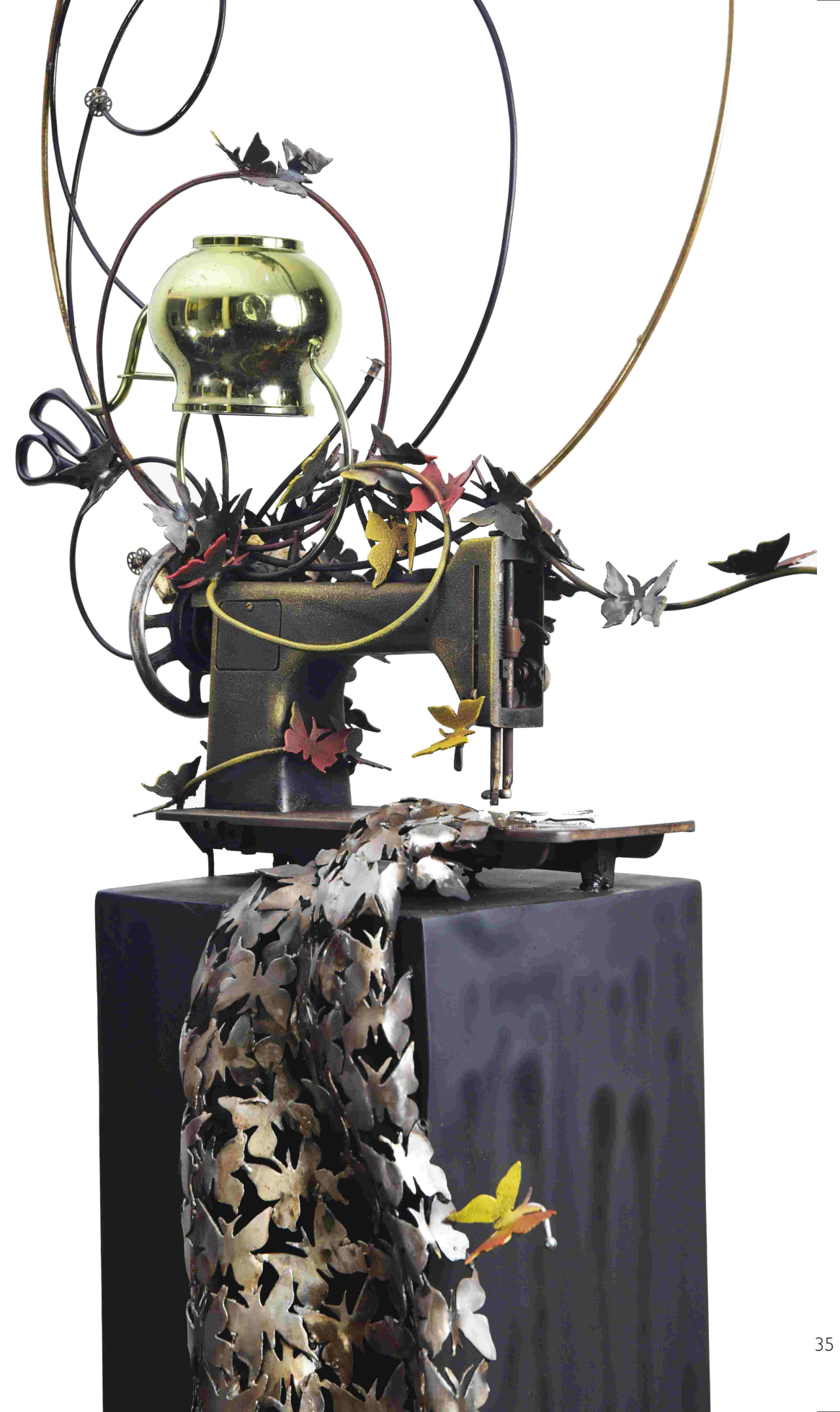
66 X 24 inches
(167 X 61 cm)
Mixed media
2020





SEWING MACHINE

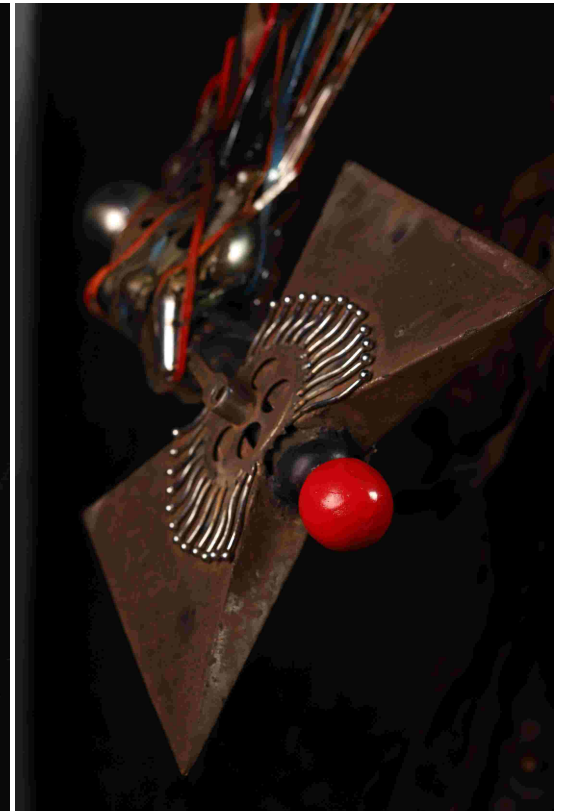
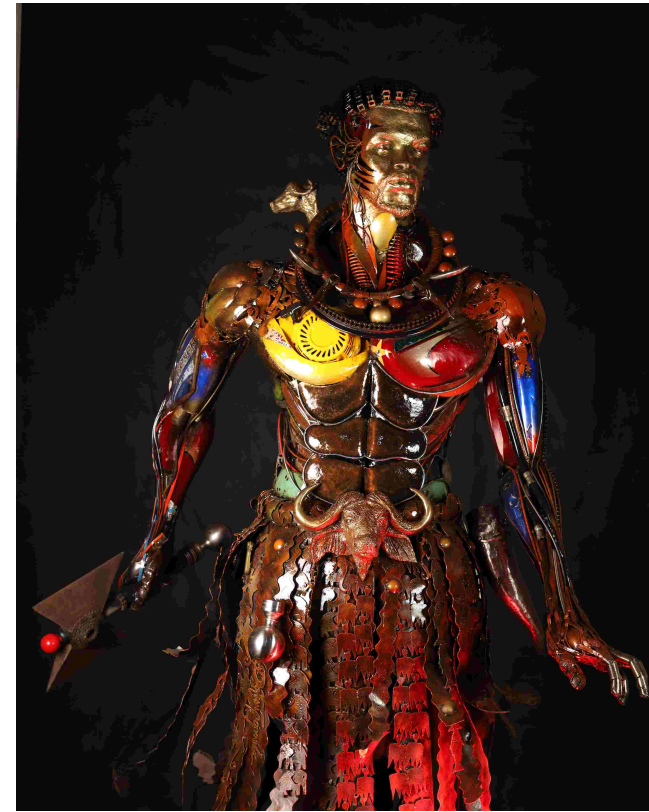
72 x 28 x 20 inches
(183 x 71 x 51 cm)
Mixed media
2020





AREWA

96 x 96 inches
244 x 244 cm
Mixed media
2020



SANGO

100 X 60 X 60inches
(254 X 152 X 152cm)
Mixed media
2020



OKERE GORI IROKO, OJU ODE DA
(HUNTER & HIS DOG)

(96 X 48 X 60inches)
(244 X 122 X 152cm)
Mixed media
2020





EYO

72 X 72inches
(183 X 183cm)
MIXED MEDIA
2020

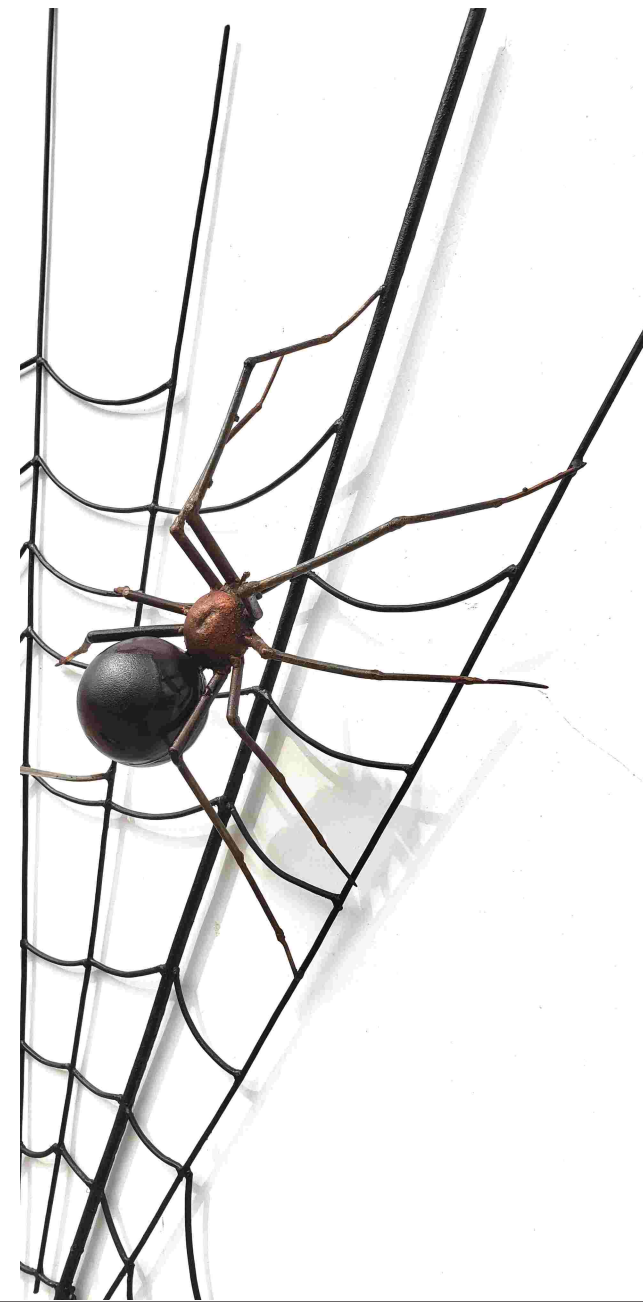
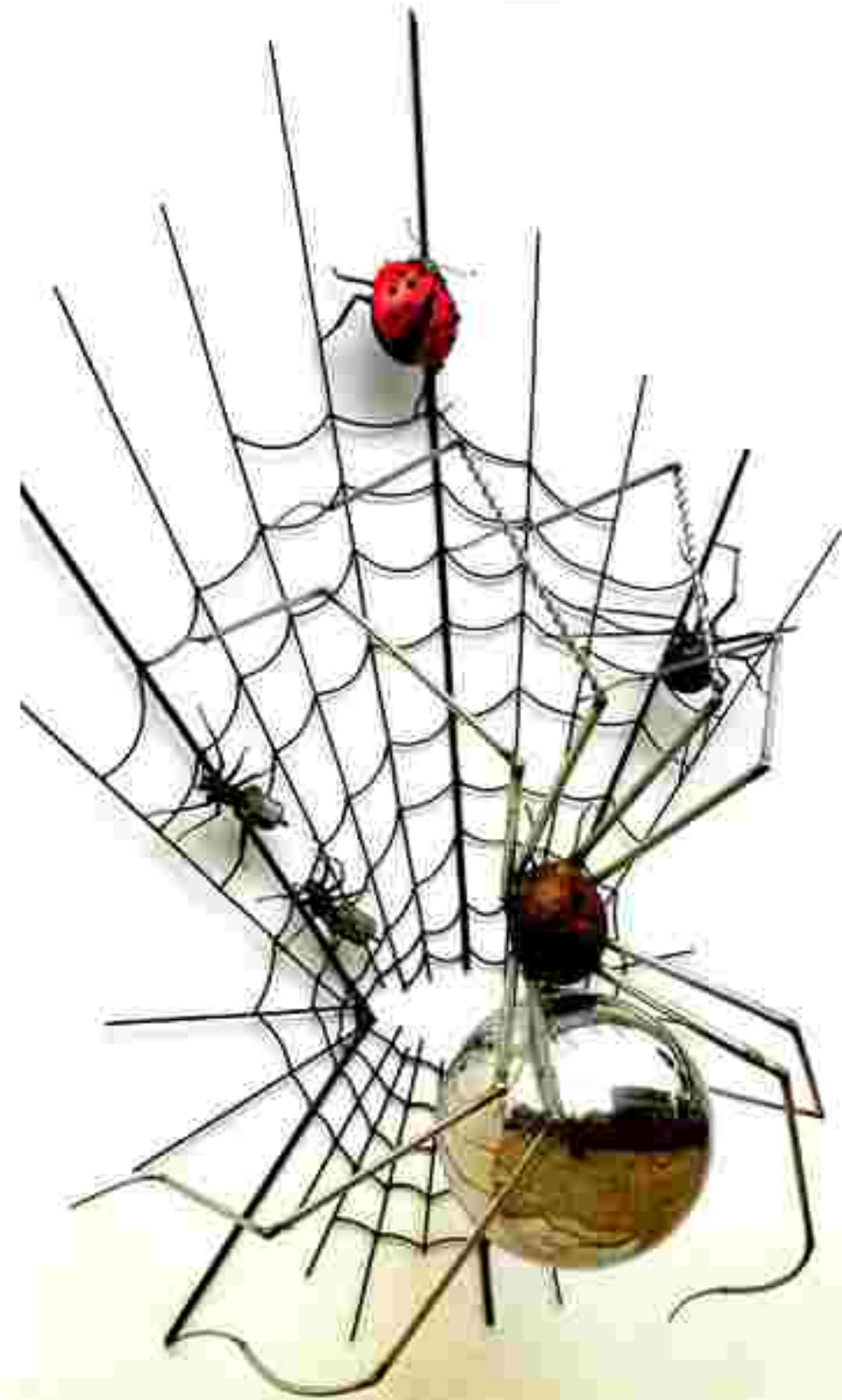


WOOD PECKER

44 x 24 x 12inches
112 x 61 x 31cm
Mixed media
2020

WEB

96 x 84 inches
(244 x 213 cm)
Mixed media
2020





KING FISHER

45 x 35 x 11 inches
(114 X 89 X 28cm)
Mixed media
2020





A TALE OF A SQUIRREL AND THE TORTOISE

40 X 24 X 18
(101.6 X 61 X 45.7cm)
Mixed media
2020





EYE NKORIN

28 x 24 x 14 inches
(71 x 61 x 36cm)
Mixed media
2020



APPRECIATION

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!

I am grateful to God for His unfailing love for me, for strength, wisdom, resources all the time.

My profound appreciation goes to our amazing sponsors, who at such a time like this believed in us; The Grandeur Hotel, Tiger Beer, Belvedere Vodka, The Luxury Reporter, TSA Contemporary Art Magazine, Faustino and George Osodi for immense support.

To my family for their amazing support and most especially my mother for her prayers always, I love you mum.

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To my staff, you're all appreciated for your firm support and understanding.

