

Breaking News: Uwagboe explores root cause of insecurity in Africa

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By Prisca Sam-Duru

The ongoing group exhibition at the Art21 gallery, Eko Hotel and Suites, Lagos, has raised a lot of question as to how Nigeria got to the pitiable state it has found itself especially regarding politics and mechanism of the mass media as well as challenges of insecurity.

Tagged Breaking News, the exhibition, which runs till June 22, showcases stunning art pieces by Jakob S, Boeskov, Teco Benson, Obinna Makata, Native Maqari, Abraham Oghobase, Bob-Nosa Uwagboe, Chibuike Uzoma and Uzorka. It explores the politics and mechanisms of the mass media through their operations. Works on display ranging from paintings to drawings, photography, video and installation, interrogates how information is disseminated, fact is constructed and how social and political life of the people are filtered through the lens of the culture industry.

The works speak eloquently of how the artists are critical about divergent social and political issues in the country.



Very topical and mindboggling is the body of work titled The Illicit Proliferation of Large and Small Arms, by Bob-Nosa Uwagboe which probes poor leadership and the state of insecurity in the country. Featuring brightly coloured figures in neon and fluorescent hues, Uwagboe creates element forms with heavy emotional charge, typical of his characteristics.

Vividly, the artist's characters are in the midst of a struggle, from militants with guns creating a state of panic, to trigger-happy policemen drinking local liquors and attacking innocent civilians- two ugly tales that have hunted Nigeria for too long.

As an artist from the Niger-Delta region, Uwagboe's burning desire to make his thoughts on the plight of Nigerians with regard to the destructive effect of insecurity, public, led to his exhibiting the first five works in the project; The unregistered gun, The unchained dog, The abuse of power, The elite and his gun man and The unregistered gun2, at the ongoing exhibition "Breaking News" at Art21 gallery, Eko hotel, Lagos.

In explicit terms, Bob-Nosa explained that "The unregistered arms poses a serious problem to both international and national security especially in some part of Africa which has witnessed the most monumental destruction and violent conflicts over the years. From the genocide in Rwanda, long conflicts in Liberia(1989-97), the sierra Leonian crisis, the war in Democratic Republic of Congo, the prevailing unrest in Niger Delta, the Boko Haram insurgence in the northern part of Nigeria and the Biafra agitation in the eastern part of Nigeria, Africa has so far, experienced very tumultuous periods due to illicit proliferation of arms."

"Proliferation of small arms is one of the root causes of insecurity challenges in Nigeria and Africa at large. I am using this current body of works to document and create more awareness of the root cause of the prevailing insecurity challenges in our time and using this to call on the federal government to wage serious war against proliferation of small arms in the country, which will be a step in reducing the challenge of insecurity in our nation. Both the rich and poor are at risk." He said.

Employing divers media, "the artists explore how Nigeria is defined in the local and global news media, and how cultural myths are articulated and perpetuated. In an act subversion, they cut, crop, and shred the vernacular news archive, a literal and symbolic act of destruction.

Rather than succumb to commercial pressures of the media industry, they created a visual language to portray new perspectives and alternative narrative. But whether critiquing current events or its distribution in newspapers, television, and the Internet, the artists form a self-reflexive view of the media, identifying how it forms our personal and collective worldview."