

ICONIC ABUJA #EYESOFALAGOSBOY



Organized by

**EYES OF A
LAGOS
BOY**

THOUGHT
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art centre

With the support of



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Abuja

...**saal art.**
Iconic photography, made for you

A Contemporary Exploration of Nigeria's Capital

Abuja is often understood through its structure—its master plan, its wide boulevards, its monumental landmarks. Conceived in 1976 as a purpose-built capital, it was designed to embody unity, neutrality, and national ambition. It is a city shaped by vision and defined by intention.

Yet no city remains only what was planned.

ICONIC ABUJA, a contemporary art exhibition led by photographer and visual storyteller **Bolaji Alonge**, founder of *Eyes of a Lagos Boy*, brings together fifteen artists working across photography, painting, and mixed media to explore the capital beyond its formal image—through the people who inhabit it and the realities that define it.

Presented in collaboration with German photographer **Katharina Sasse**, whose participation introduces a strong international dimension, the exhibition reflects a cross-cultural dialogue that resonates with Abuja's global character. The project is made possible with the support of the German Embassy Abuja, and is hosted by **Thought Pyramid Art Centre**, whose continued commitment to contemporary African art provides an essential platform for this exchange.

The participating artists—**John Ali, Bolaji Alonge, Ahmad Michael, Aisha Mbaya, Mustapha Musa, Dan Ogbogu, Yemi Olapo, Olaosun Oluwapelumi, Babajide Olusanya, Oluwaseun Otokiti, Austin Orakwelu, Katharina Sasse, Olanrewaju Shittu, Moses Sodipo, and Christabel Uchechi**—offer a wide range of perspectives, each engaging with Abuja through distinct visual and conceptual approaches.

Across the exhibition, Abuja emerges as a city of contrasts and intersections. It is a place where ambition and uncertainty coexist, where power and precarity occupy the same space, and where the promise of progress is continuously negotiated through everyday life. Monumental architecture stands alongside informal realities; symbols of success move in parallel with stories of endurance and adaptation.

At its core, the exhibition insists on a simple but powerful idea: a city is defined not only by its buildings, but by its people. As one artist reflects, *“Abuja is not the structures... it is the people—the ones who move through it every day, who give it meaning without trying to be seen.”*

Following the success of *ICONIC LAGOS*, this exhibition extends a broader project of reimagining Nigerian cities through an African-centred lens—one that foregrounds lived experience, memory, and cultural complexity.

Beyond the exhibition, **ICONIC ABUJA** invites active engagement through a series of public events:

- **Visual Storytelling Masterclass** — *Thursday, 23 April 2026*
- **Kids Play (Children’s Creative Workshop)** — *Saturday, 25 April 2026*

ICONIC ABUJA invites you to look again—beyond the surface, into the life of the city itself

www.eyesofalagosboy.com

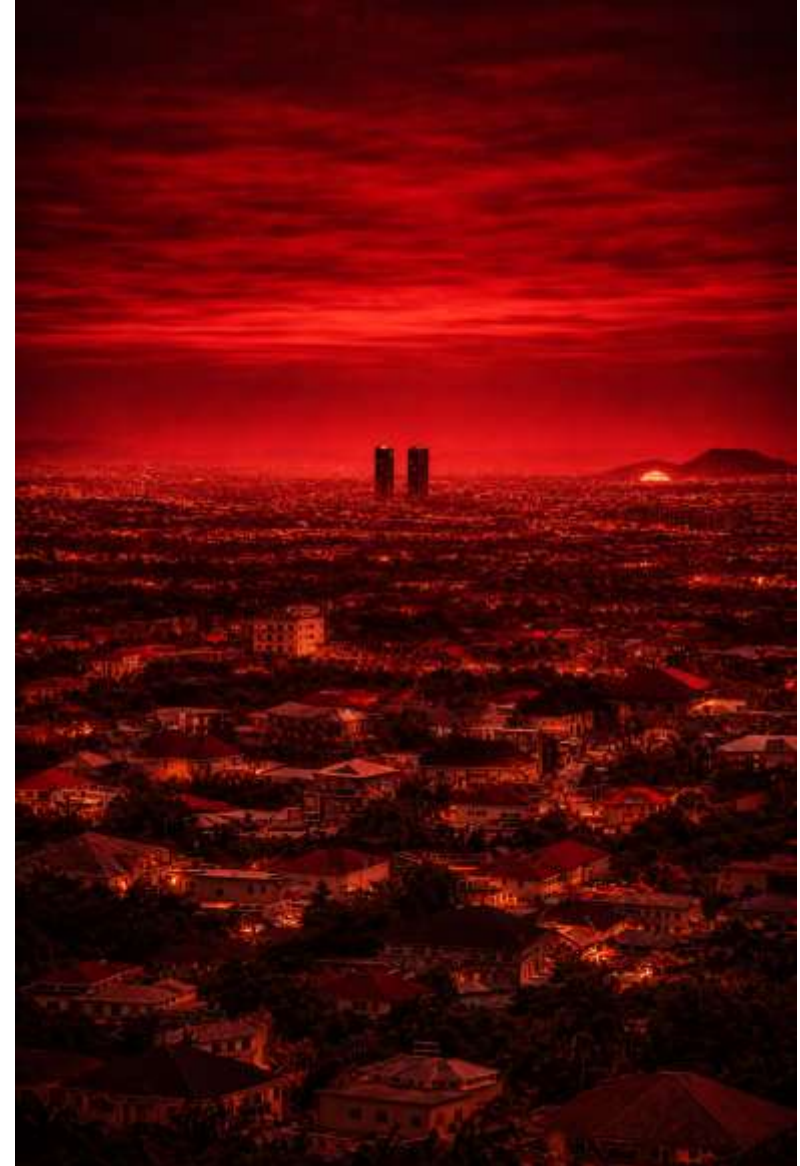


Bolaji Alonge (Photography) | @eyesofalagosboy

Bolaji Alonge is a Nigerian photographer and visual storyteller, widely recognized for his platform *Eyes of a Lagos Boy*, through which he has built a distinctive visual archive of Nigerian urban life. His work is grounded in documenting cities from an African-centred perspective, capturing not only their physical transformation but also the lived realities, cultural nuances, and human stories that define them.

Through projects such as *ICONIC LAGOS* and now *ICONIC ABUJA*, Alonge expands the visual language through which Nigerian cities are understood. His photography moves between documentation and narrative construction, creating images that are both immediate and archival. By connecting past and present, he challenges dominant visual representations and repositions the city as a space shaped by memory, identity, and everyday experience.

Bolaji Alonge



Bolaji Alonge





Bolaji Alonge





Bolaji Alonge



Bolaji Alonge





Bolaji Alonge

John Ali (Painting) | @ochewu_ali

John Ali is a visual artist based in Lafia, Nasarawa State, whose work explores themes of identity, community, and human experience through expressive figurative painting. Working primarily with acrylic on canvas, his practice is deeply rooted in social realities, drawing attention to both individual and collective narratives shaped by environment and circumstance.

His series *Shadows of Becoming* (2025) examines the fragile and often complex space between childhood innocence and lived reality. Through carefully constructed portraits of children, Ali explores vulnerability, resilience, and the unseen forces that shape identity over time. The subjects' steady and contemplative gazes do not seek sympathy but instead convey a quiet dignity and strength, emphasizing endurance and awareness. The work invites reflection on the processes through which individuals are formed, shaped, and transformed within their social environments.



John Ali



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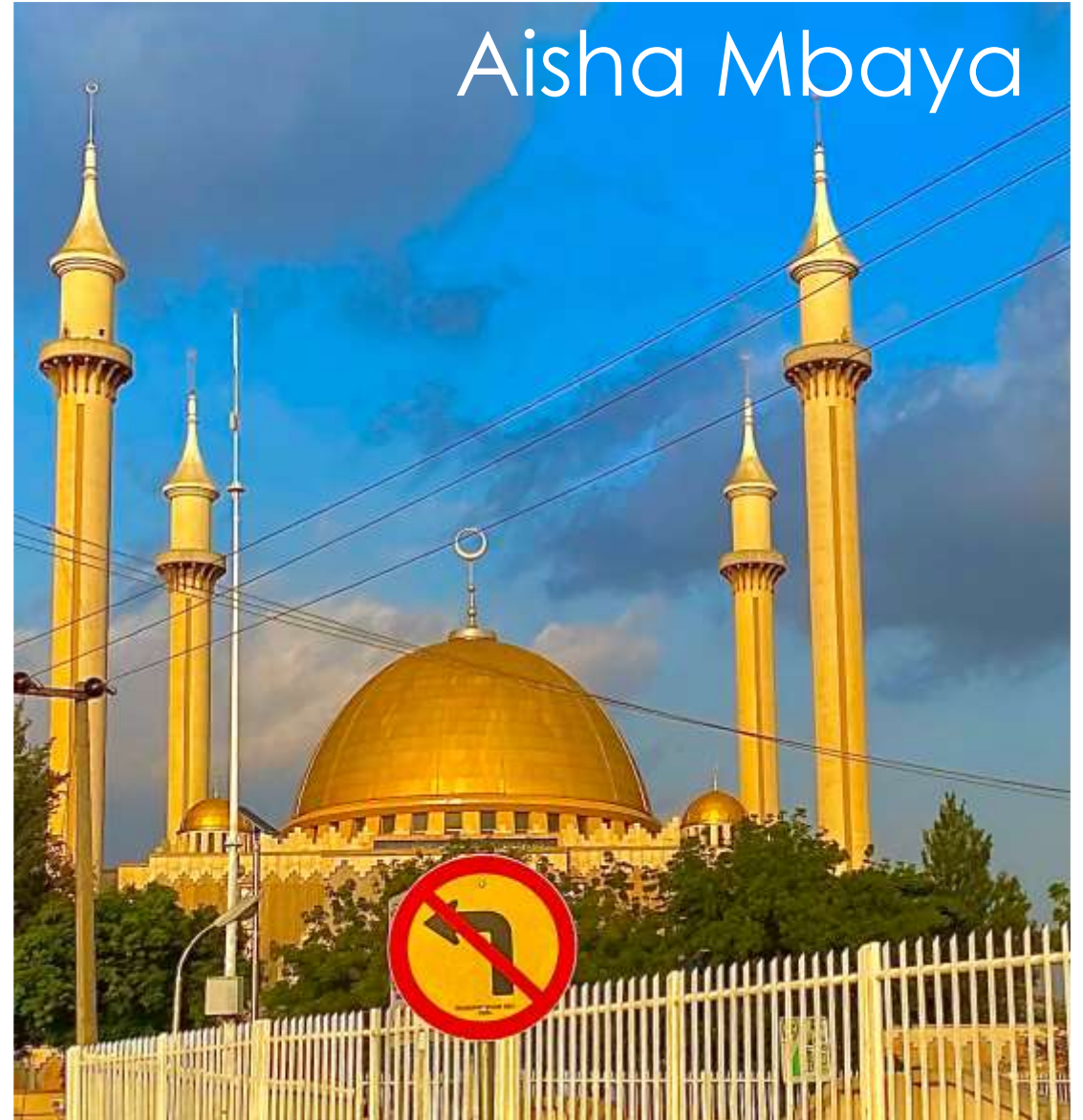
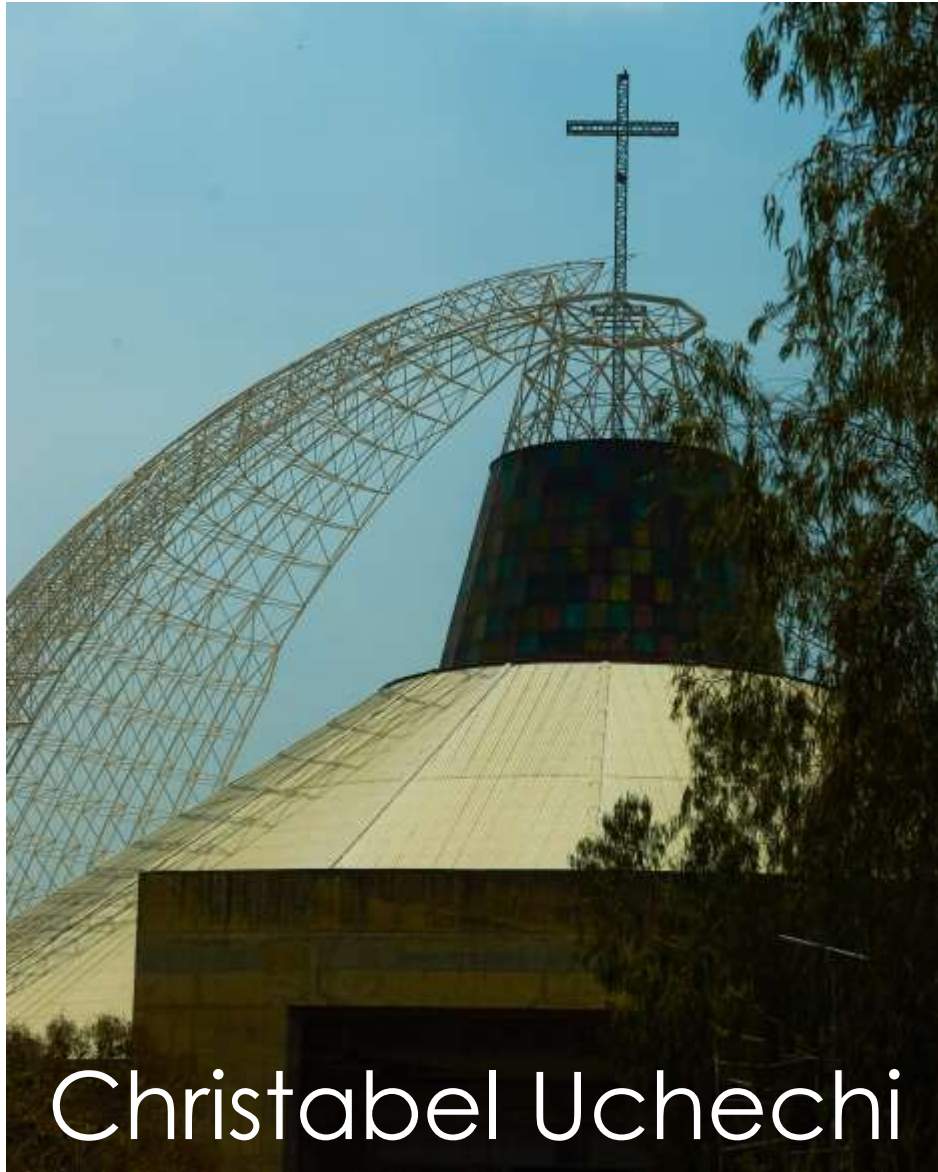
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Aisha Mbaya (Photography) | @thembaya_art

Aisha Mbaya is a multidisciplinary artist whose work engages with themes of shadow, environment, and visual storytelling through a distinctive approach she describes as “Noir.” By stripping away colour and focusing on contrast, light, and composition, she reveals the structural and emotional depth of her subjects, creating images that are both minimal and layered in meaning.

In *The Sacred Detour*, Mbaya explores the intersection of tradition and modernity within Abuja. The juxtaposition of a mosque, road signage, and urban infrastructure reflects the coexistence of different belief systems and temporalities within the city. Power lines subtly connect these elements, suggesting the complex and often invisible relationships between past and present. The work encourages viewers to look more closely at their surroundings and to recognize the unexpected beauty and meaning embedded within everyday spaces.





Ahmed Michael (Drawing / Ballpoint Art) | @originalmicel

Ahmed Michael is a contemporary artist based in Abuja who works primarily with ballpoint pen to create highly detailed figurative drawings. Without formal artistic training, he has developed a distinctive visual language rooted in raw expression and emotional depth, focusing on themes of masculinity, vulnerability, identity, and transformation.

In *Becoming*, Michael reflects on the pivotal moment of self-realisation, presenting the figure as a symbol of awakening and inner potential. The work explores the tension between past and future selves, emphasizing the process of growth, introspection, and alignment with one's purpose. In *Gaze of Resilience*, he shifts focus to the strength of women, capturing a quiet yet powerful form of endurance that is expressed through posture, expression, and presence. Together, these works examine resilience as both an internal and external force, shaped by experience and sustained through determination.



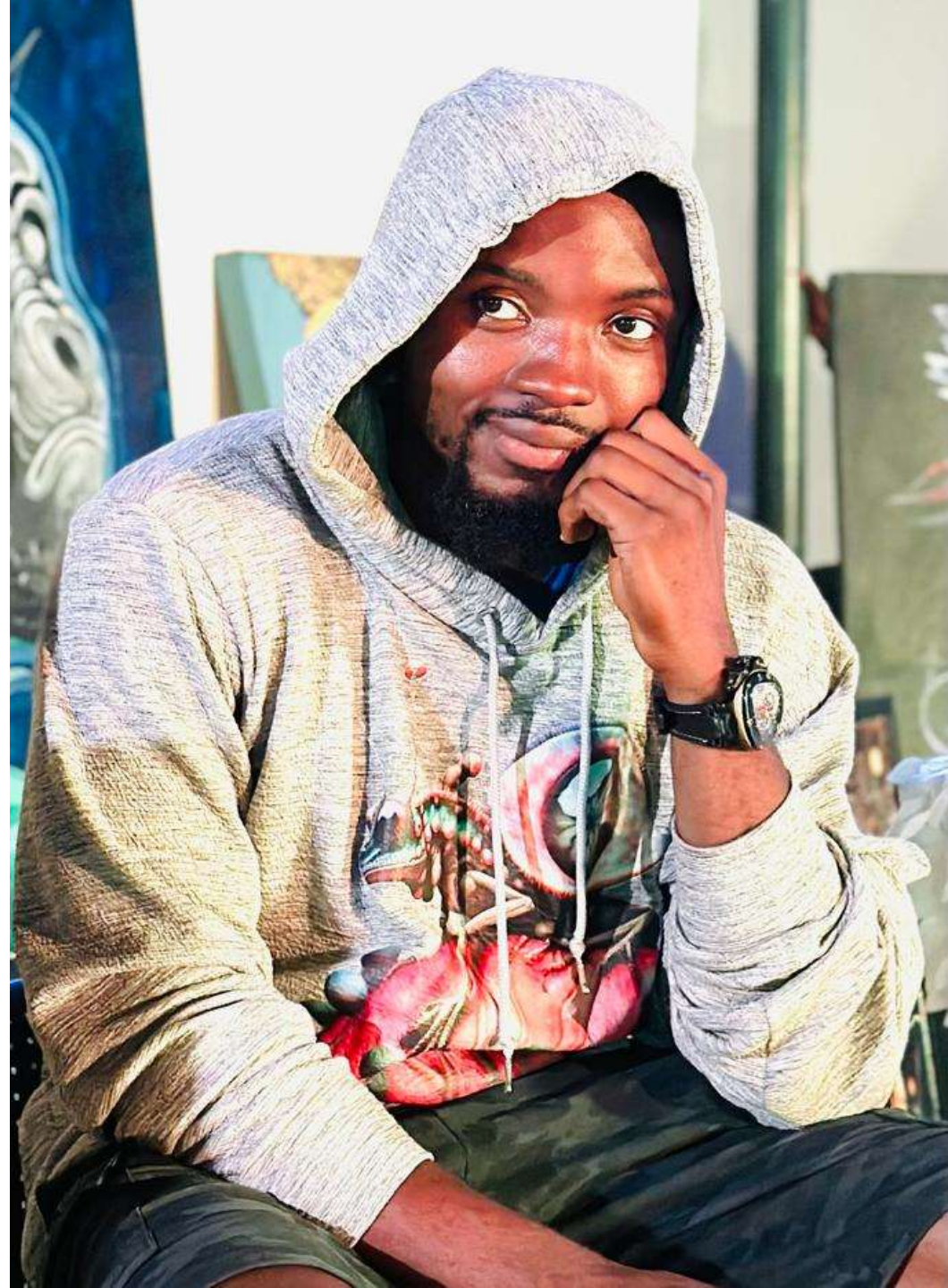


Ahmed Michael

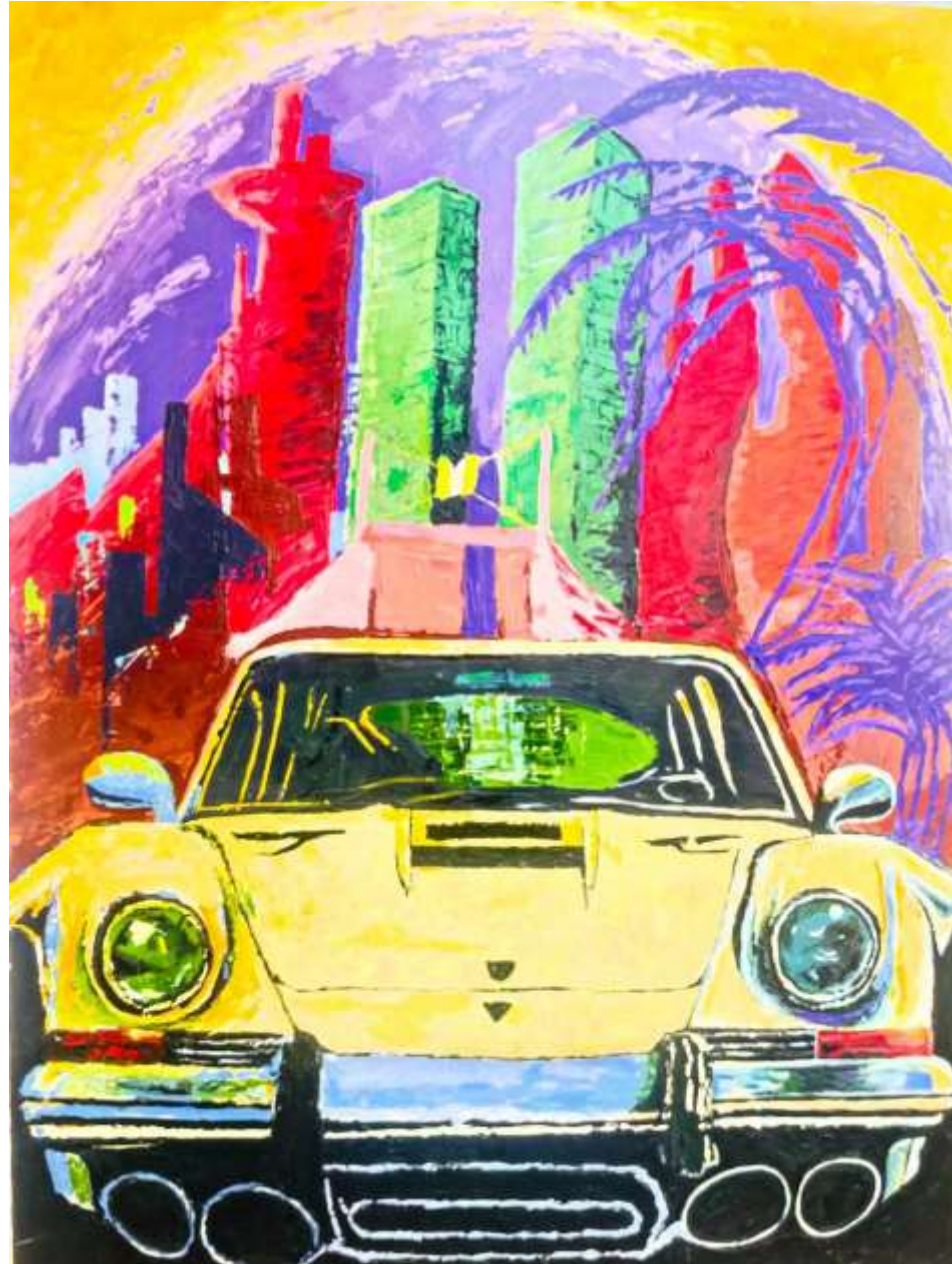
Mustapha Musa (Painting) | @mustaphamusa.art

Mustapha Musa is an artist and designer whose work explores themes of Northern Nigerian culture, history, and contemporary social realities. Working across acrylic, oil paint, and pyrography, he employs layered techniques and textured surfaces to create compositions that are both visually striking and conceptually rich.

In *Posh City*, Musa presents Abuja as a symbol of aspiration, ambition, and modern identity. The image of a Porsche moving through the city's iconic landmarks serves as a metaphor for success and visibility within a capital built on dreams of progress. At the same time, the work reflects the performative nature of achievement in an environment where status and perception play a significant role. Through this composition, Abuja emerges as both a physical space and a symbolic landscape shaped by desire, movement, and transformation.



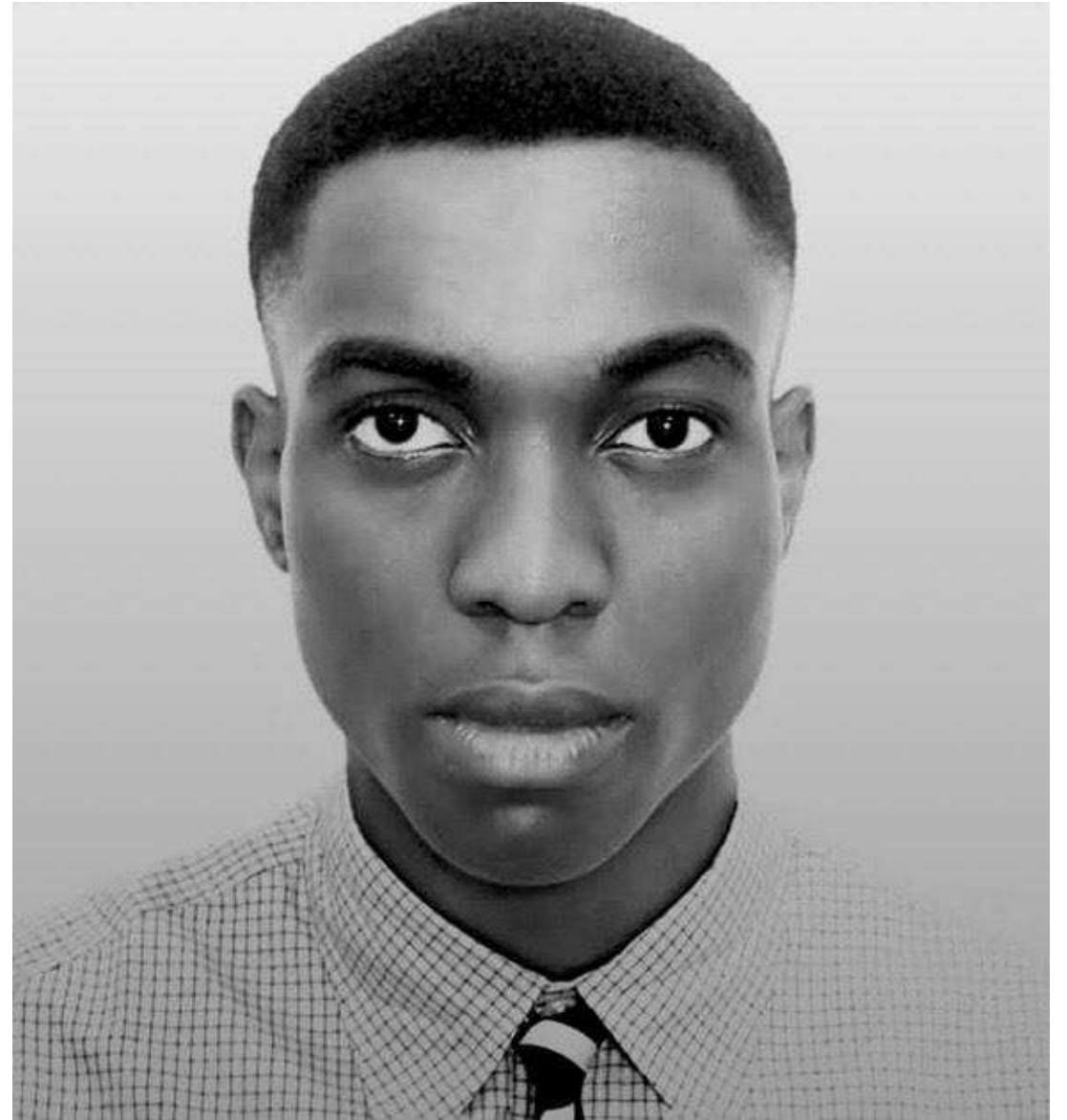
Mustapha Musa



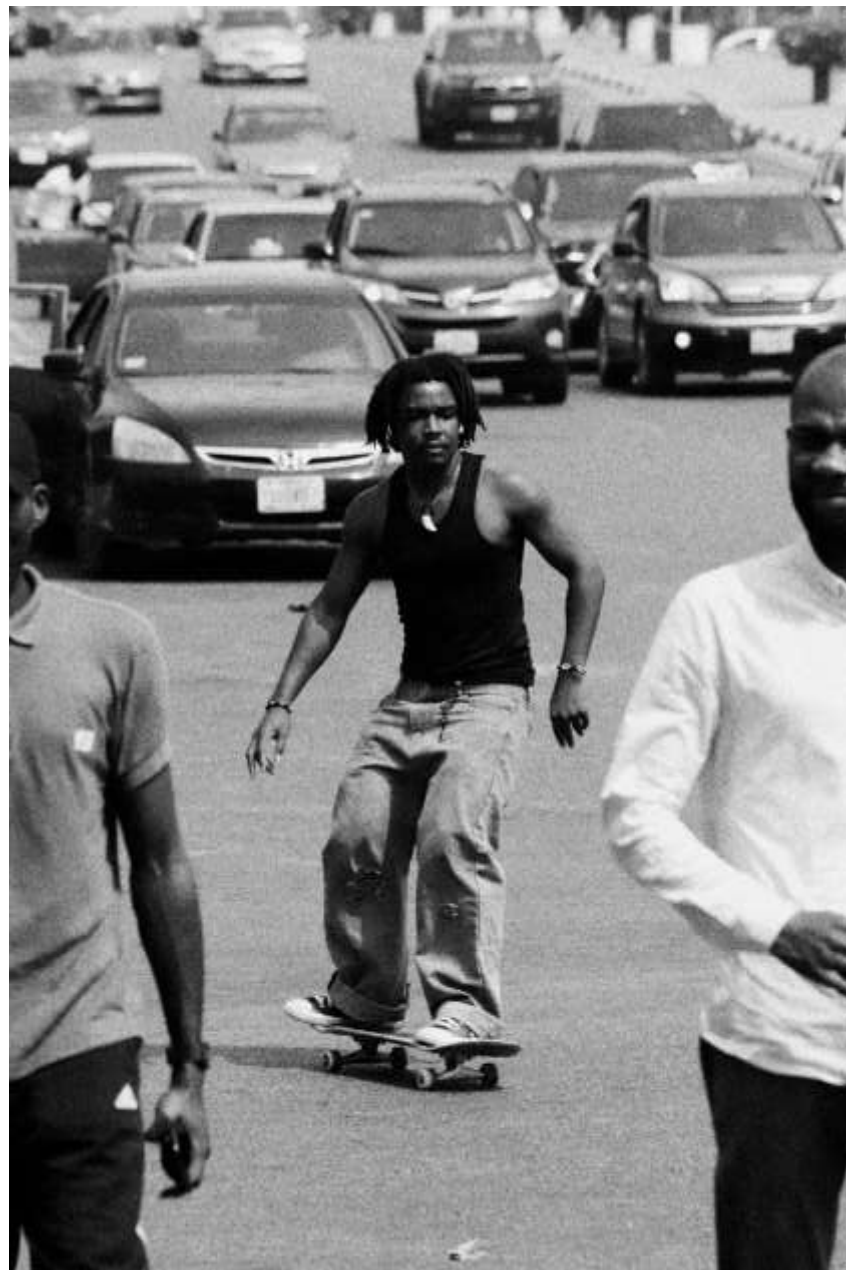
Dan Ogbogu (Photography) | @nvd_ugbogo

Dan Ogbogu is a photographer and videographer whose work focuses on documenting subcultures and alternative communities within Nigeria. His practice is driven by an interest in capturing movement, energy, and the diversity of lived experience that exists beyond mainstream narratives.

In *Diel Skating Down CBD*, Ogbogu presents a dynamic moment within Abuja's central business district, where a skateboarder moves fluidly through a space defined by traffic and routine. The contrast between the structured urban environment and the freedom of motion embodied by the skater creates a powerful visual tension. The work challenges conventional perceptions of the city, revealing unexpected expressions of creativity, individuality, and resistance within its everyday rhythms.



Dan Ogbogu



Yemi Olapo (Zoid) (Painting) | @thezoidpiece

Yemi Olapo, also known as Zoid, is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans painting, graffiti, digital illustration, and art toy creation. His work is centred around recurring characters—referred to as ZOID—which serve as vehicles for storytelling, reflecting personal experiences as well as broader social, cultural, and political realities.

In *Bread Winner* (2026), Olapo explores the complexity of survival within a contemporary urban environment. The work reflects the necessity of navigating multiple identities and roles simultaneously, highlighting the tension between institutional structures and informal systems. Through layered imagery and symbolic representation, he captures the psychological agility required to operate within these overlapping realities. The piece ultimately becomes a tribute to resilience and adaptability in the face of constant pressure and expectation.





Yemi Olapo

Babajide Olusanya (Photography) | @4toscenethesis

Babajide Olusanya is a photographer whose work is rooted in documenting communities and environments that exist beyond dominant urban narratives. His practice is grounded in observation and a careful attention to both people and the structures that define their ways of life, often focusing on spaces that are overlooked or marginalised within mainstream representations of the city.

In *Rugan Fulani*, Olusanya presents a detailed visual study of nomadic Fulani settlements located on the outskirts of Abuja. The work documents both the architectural forms—constructed from natural materials—and the daily lives of the inhabitants, offering insight into patterns of movement, adaptation, and continuity. By situating these communities within the broader context of the capital, the work expands the understanding of Abuja to include its peripheral realities, highlighting the diversity and complexity of experiences that coexist within and around the city.



Babajide Olusanya







Austin Orakwelu (Painting) | @official_austinart

Austin Orakwelu is a contemporary visual artist whose work engages deeply with the human condition, focusing on resilience, hardship, and the dignity of everyday life. Working primarily with oil on canvas, he draws inspiration from his immediate environment, translating lived experiences into expressive and emotionally charged figurative compositions.

In *No Excuses* and *Hope*, Orakwelu presents portraits inspired by individuals whose lives embody perseverance in the face of adversity. Each work is rooted in real encounters, transforming personal stories into broader reflections on strength, endurance, and aspiration. Through the use of light and shadow, as well as carefully considered colour contrasts, he highlights both the challenges and the inner strength of his subjects. These works function not only as tributes to individual resilience, but also as commentaries on the wider social conditions that shape the lives of many Nigerians.





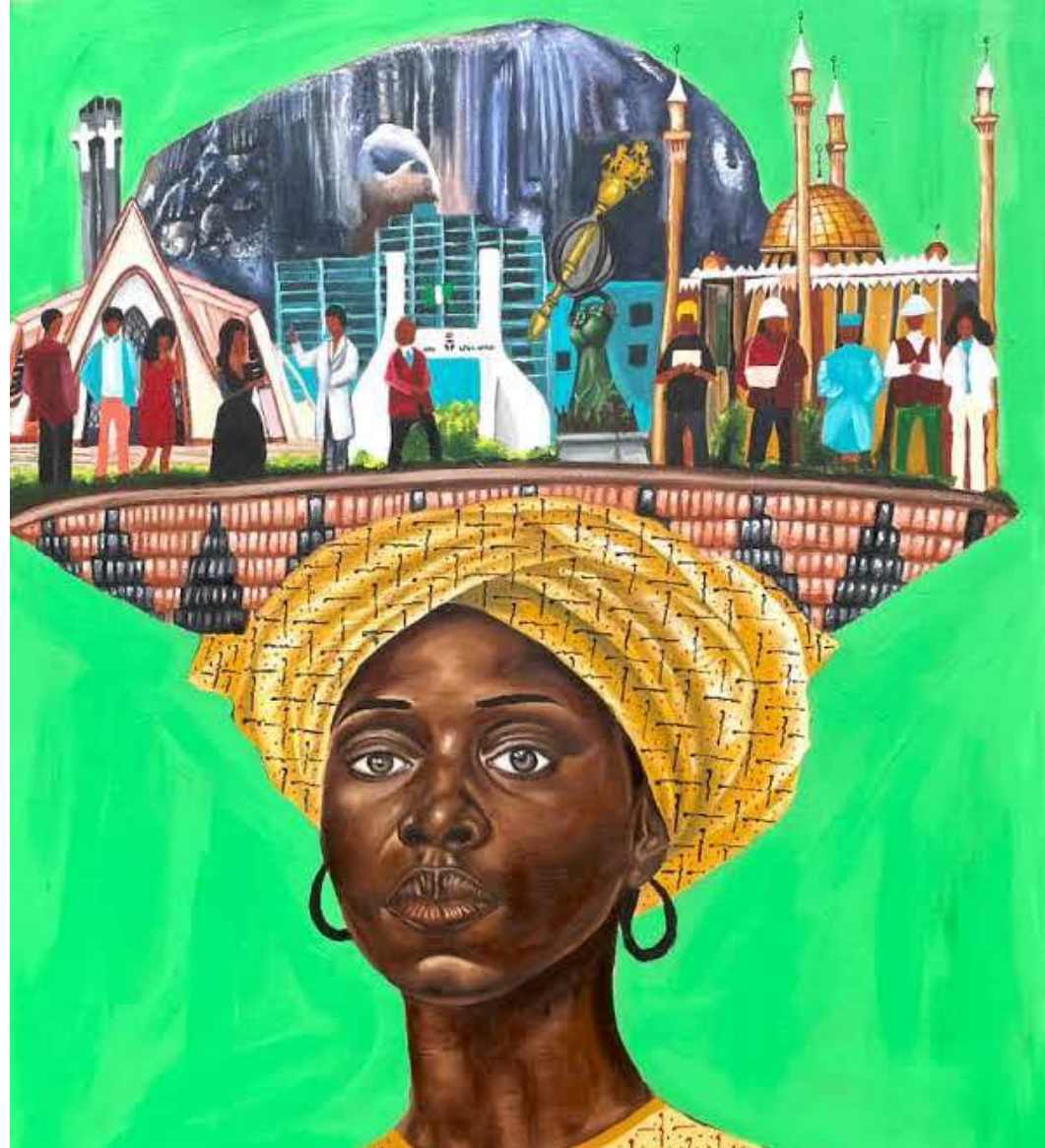
Austin
Orakwelu

**Olaosun Oluwapelumi (Painting) |
@olaosun_oluwapelumi**

Olaosun Oluwapelumi is a painter whose work explores emotional depth, identity, and social consciousness through figurative compositions. Working with oil and acrylic, she engages with themes of mental health, vulnerability, and collective responsibility, positioning art as a platform for reflection and dialogue.

In *Custodian of the Nation's Pulse*, Oluwapelumi presents Abuja not simply as a geographical location, but as a shared responsibility carried by its people. At the centre of the composition stands a calm yet resolute female figure, symbolising strength and resilience. Above her unfolds a layered visual landscape that incorporates key elements of Abuja's identity, including Zuma Rock, the National Mosque, and the National Christian Centre. These elements reflect the coexistence of diverse beliefs and systems within the capital. Through this work, the city is reimagined as a living entity shaped by its inhabitants, whose collective presence sustains its identity and meaning.





Olaosun Oluwapelumi

Olanrewaju Shittu (Photography) @paschalolanrewaju1

Olanrewaju Shittu is a photographer based in Ibadan whose work is driven by a strong commitment to storytelling. His practice focuses on capturing the resilience and strength of individuals, with particular attention to the representation of women and the broader social realities that shape their lives.

Through carefully composed images, Shittu highlights both individual presence and collective identity, situating personal narratives within a wider cultural context. His work reflects an interest in the quiet power of everyday moments, revealing dignity, beauty, and endurance in ways that are both subtle and impactful. Within the context of this exhibition, his images contribute to a broader understanding of Abuja as a space defined not only by structure, but by the lived experiences of its people.





Moses Sodipo (Painting) | @moses_odogwu

Moses Sodipo is a contemporary painter whose work explores the layered realities of urban life in Nigeria, with a particular focus on resilience, labour, and socio-economic dynamics. Working with acrylic on canvas, he constructs complex compositions that combine narrative detail, symbolism, and expressive use of colour.

In *The Golden Hustle*, Sodipo presents a vivid portrayal of Abuja as both a space of opportunity and a site of ongoing struggle. The central figure—a young street vendor balancing a basin of corn—becomes a powerful symbol of everyday resilience, representing the industriousness and responsibility carried by many young Nigerians. Surrounding elements, including references to fuel scarcity and manual labour, situate this figure within a broader socio-economic context. The presence of Fela Anikulapo Kuti introduces an additional layer of cultural and political meaning, invoking themes of resistance and awareness. Through its rich visual language, the work captures the intensity of urban life while affirming the dignity and value embedded within daily struggle.



Moses Sodipo



Oluwaseun Otokiti (Photography) | @theotokiti

Oluwaseun Otokiti is a photographer whose work captures moments of movement, transition, and reflection within everyday life. His practice is grounded in observing ordinary situations and revealing the deeper meanings they hold through careful attention to timing, composition, and perspective.

In *Between Shores and Patience*, Otokiti reflects on the experience of movement—both physical and emotional—within the urban environment. Whether depicting a solitary figure navigating water or a collective moment of waiting within a transport system, his images evoke themes of persistence, uncertainty, and trust in process. Through these works, he highlights the quiet strength required to continue moving forward, even in situations defined by delay, transition, or ambiguity.





Christabel Uchechi (Photography) | @christabel_uchechi

Christabel Uchechi is a photographer whose work focuses on the human dimension of urban space, capturing the presence of individuals who shape and define the environments they inhabit. Her practice is rooted in observing everyday life and revealing the often-unseen narratives that unfold within it.

In *The Soul of Abuja*, Uchechi offers a powerful redefinition of the city, shifting attention away from its physical structures to the people who give it meaning. Through a restrained and thoughtful approach, she emphasizes that Abuja's identity is not found in its roads or buildings, but in the individuals who move through it daily. By foregrounding these often-overlooked presences, the work transforms the perception of the city, presenting it as a lived and continuously evolving experience.



Christabel Uchechi





Katharina Sasse (Photography) | @globallifelens

Katharina Sasse is a German photographer whose work centres on street photography as a means of exploring and preserving the essence of the places she inhabits. With a background in law and a life shaped by movement across different countries, she approaches photography from the perspective of a transient yet deeply attentive observer, guided by curiosity, openness, and a strong sensitivity to human presence.

Her work is driven by an ongoing inquiry into how the character and rhythm of a city can be captured authentically. By focusing on people in their everyday environments, she reveals the subtle interactions and fleeting moments that define urban life. In her photographs, ordinary encounters are transformed into points of connection that offer insight into the emotional and cultural fabric of a place. Through her work in Abuja, Sasse captures the city not through its monuments, but through its rhythms, gestures, and lived experiences, offering a nuanced and intimate reading of its identity.













Katharina Sasse



ICONIC ABUJA

curated by Sandra Alonge