

The logo for ARC GALLERY, featuring the letters 'ARC' in a large, bold, black font above the word 'GALLERY' in a smaller, black font, all contained within a rectangular frame with a wood-grain texture.

ARC
GALLERY

“Much Strings Attached” Exhibition

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract artwork. It features a dense, intricate network of thin, light-colored lines that resemble roots or tangled strings. These lines are set against a textured, multi-colored background of earthy tones including browns, tans, and yellows, with scattered patches of red, green, and blue. The overall effect is one of organic complexity and depth.

Uchay Joel **Chima**

Catalogue of the Exhibition

'Much Strings Attached'

by Uchay Joel Chima

arc Gallery . Barge Belle

11 Hale Wharf . Ferry Lane

Tottenham . London . N17 9NF

24th June - 13th July 2010

Curator: John Egbo (arc artistic director)

Writer: Jean Joseph (artist / curator)

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Catalogue Design: Caldine Ndlovu

Concept and Design: Uchay Joel Chima and John Egbo

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cover (detail)
Girls in the Hood
string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel
90 cm x 125 cm

Foreword

arc Gallery is proud to welcome you to 'Much Strings Attached': an exhibition of new works on societal and relational themes by Uchay Joel Chima. Based in Lagos, Nigeria, Chima is one of the most creative artists to have emerged in recent years. He uses mixed media in the creation of intellectual and aesthetically engaging works that captivate the viewer with their sensory appeal.

An intelligent artist, Chima is a seemingly quite individual, with amiable personality and a ready smile, whose works explode with energy and colour. The studied consideration he gives to his materials means that his work dextrously synthesises ideas in order to merge social and environmental discourses together with his aesthetics. Already an established artist in his homeland, I have no doubt that this exhibition at arc will help further the reputation of this rising star as he brings his work to a global audience.

My thanks to Jean Joseph, Giovanni Grosso, Christopher Yiannitsaros, Caldine Ndlovu, and the rest of arc and NLPC staff, for all their efforts towards the preparation of this exhibition; and last, but by no means least, to Chima himself for his creative vision and for making this exhibition a joy to produce.

John Egbo
arc artistic director



Only Connect

"We are simply designed for making connections! For this exhibition, and with this in mind, I have elected to work with materials that I believe are synonymous with the notions of bonding, togetherness, intimacy and entanglement: strings, ropes and knitting wool. In an era where global upheaval; whether natural, economic or social are the issues of the day - in terms of survival, there is a desperate need for people who can and want to make a positive difference to others. 'Much Strings Attached' is a phrase I have created to refer to our fear of commitment in all societies where we are often forced to be our brother's keeper. It is also my belief that everyone is needed, even if we do not feel like we are. This thought might in itself provoke a debate on the platform of Western and African cultural points of view on the subject of social responsibility. I believe that the resonances of my preferred materials instantly infer a need to reevaluate and, more importantly, to strengthen our relationships with those around us, in the interest of supporting one another through current difficulties. We are very much attached to one another with much strings."

Uchay Joel Chima





Relationship Blues

string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel

120 cm x 90 cm

Bridges That Bind

Uchay Joel Chima's conceptual weaving together of human attachments entitled 'Much Strings Attached' is a relevant and timely approach to our modern conflict of relationships with each other.

This socio-visual enactment – a treatise on human interaction, translates a convoluted currency of natural and synthetic materials, such as string, wool, rope and sacks into organic figures. Chima has woven images of camaraderie, community and intimacy with lace-like intricacy. The muted shades of oil and acrylic express the densities and struggles with our tactile nature versus the avoidance of responsibility. More robustly, his *Emerging Chiefs I & II*, reach out from the canvas to assert their authority. The featurelessness of the figures might be communicated as a proverbial call for courageous leadership within each private individual, if he or she chooses to come forward. And the strings that bind and unbind us to each other and issues we prefer not to face; disunity, disagreement and social upheaval are gently evoked in *Relationship Blues*.

There is a movement and, stillness in these profoundly haunting scenes. The experience on encounter with the *Dance of Intimacy*, or *Collective Responsibility*, is an astonishing unfurling of pre-history. The impression is of fossilised entities escaping from a paleontological prison within slabs of limestone.



The subject of gender is explored in works such as *Girls in the Hood*, *Friends I* and *Circle of Friends II*. In these works, Chima uses circles to imitate the curves of the female form. This is particularly interesting as the circle is traditionally gendered as 'female' due to its association with the maternal enclave of the womb. A plea for mending fractured societies is implied and an association might be interpreted between the binary of feminine spheres – mending, healing and restoring with masculine-prone destruction and conflict.

Works such as *Relationship Blues* and *Dance of intimacy I & II* are multifaceted pieces where Chima uses music and dance; famously described by George Bernard Shaw as the "vertical expression of a horizontal desire..." to explore notions of closeness and intimacy. 'It takes two to tango' Chima reminds us, indicating that the act of dancing might be solitary, but when involving two or more people, perfect synchronicity is not always achievable and responsibility must be shared to arrive at a resolution.

Dance of Intimacy I
string, rope, sack, acrylic, oil, enamel
90 cm x 90 cm



below

We Belong Together

string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel

125 cm x 90 cm

right

Festivity I

string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel

90 cm x 90 cm



The tendency to engage in conversations or to culturally dissect this subject of being “our brother’s keeper” is to be expected and can only complement these works, as a message requires a response or reaction. These conversations might touch on what typifies relationships and responsibility to each other in the West, as opposed to a developing nation, a city as opposed to a rural area. The social practice in a major metropolis like London, it may be argued, would be to shun human responsibilities outside a familial or immediate circle: To err on the side of caution, for purposes of self-protection and survival in our modern technological society. Yet Chima’s paintings of encrusted colour speak that, “we are still in desperate need of people who actually *can* and *want* to make a positive difference to others.” This is a universal need in any part of the world, in any community and, as humanity reacts positively in a crisis, so Chima creates positive entanglements on the canvas. Humanity reacts effortlessly as the soft blending of colours in *Socialising* and whips up a storm of energy in *Festivity I & II*.

Did Chima’s “search” for his materials require physical steps, or serendipity of the mind? It was the Swiss artist Paul Klee who said that drawing is “taking a line for a walk”. In turn, Chima has taken his materials for a walk within this painted environment of our human conscience. Hope lies in the delicate web of ‘bridges’ linking these figures and the metaphorical glue that holds us together. Chima has created the theme on which to explore attachments and we, as viewers, are an intrinsic link to this act of living connectivity.

Writer: Jean Joseph

Assistant Writer: Christopher Yiannitsaros

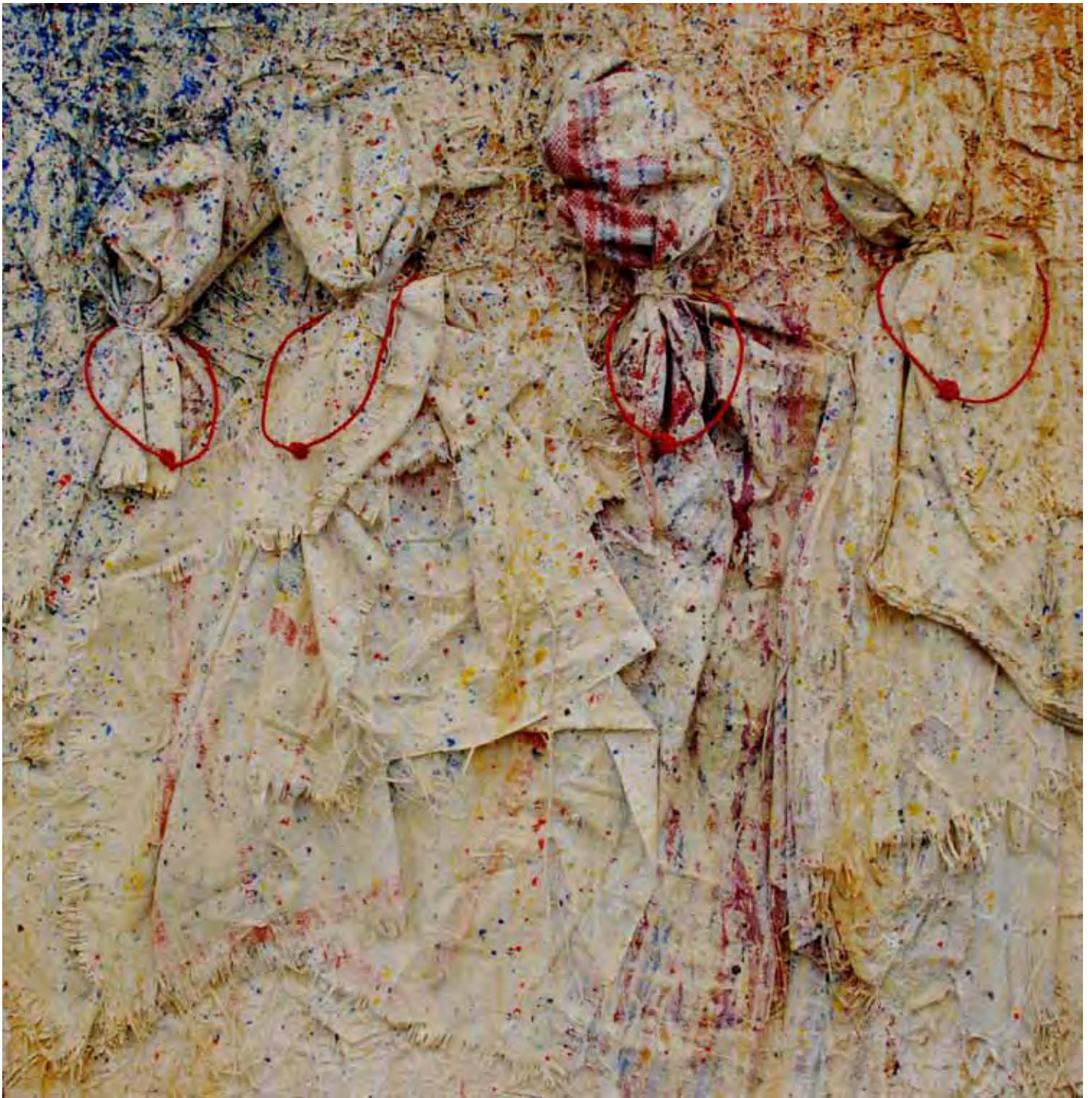
below

Socialising

string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel

125 cm x 90 cm





right
Emerging Chiefs I
string, rope, sack, acrylic, oil
90 cm x 90 cm

above
Emerging Chiefs II
string, rope, sack, acrylic, oil
90 cm x 90 cm





Dance of Intimacy II
string, rope, sack, acrylic, oil
90 cm x 90 cm



above left
Outing I
string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel
60 cm x 90cm



above right
Outing II
string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel
60 cm x 90cm



above left
Collective Responsibility
string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel
90 cm x 90 cm



above right
Friends I
string, rope, acrylic, oil, enamel
120 cm x 30 cm



Wellwishers I

string, rope, sack, acrylic, oil

90 cm x 90 cm

Uchay Joel Chima

Chima is a mixed media artist who works with sand, wax, colours, charcoal, thread/ropes and found objects in his aesthetic creations. Chima graduated in 1997 from the Art School of the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, and has exhibited his work in Nigeria, South Africa and Canada. He unveils paintings and thought provoking installations that dissect the anatomy of realities around us whilst employing conventional and unconventional approaches in his restless exploration.

“I enjoy spending quiet moments observing nature, exploring shapes, colours and designs; my interpretation of objects and subjects that are delightful to the eyes, I transfer to boards and canvases poetically”.



TRAINING / QUALIFICATIONS:

- 1995 - 1997 Institute of Management and Technology - H.N. Diploma - Painting
- 1992 - 1994 O.N. Diploma- Fine and Applied Arts
- 1986 - 1989 Government Technical College, Enugu (West African Examination Certificate)

AWARDS:

- 1996 Award for Excellence, Academy Visual Arts Competition
- 2009 Best Video Art - Imaginary Live Video Art Show, Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos

EXHIBITIONS HELD:

- 1995 Forms, cultural spirit, British Council, Enugu
- 1995 NIM Exhibition, National Museum, Lagos
- 1996 Academy Press Visual Arts Exhibition, Lagos
- 1997 Real Light, National Museum, Enugu
- 2002 Rhythm and Harmony, Didi Museum, Lagos. (Solo Show)

- 2003 Colours Nigeriana, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2004 Spring Festival, HCC Auditorium, Pretoria, South-Africa
- 2004 Art in the Park, Magnolia Del, South Africa
- 2005 Hues and Ashes, Terra Kulture, Lagos. (Solo Show)
- 2007 Invitation to Dance, Misa , Lagos. (Solo Show)
- Charity Show (Represented), Street Haven, Toronto, Canada
- 2008 (Apr) In God We Trust, (Workshop and Group show), Goethe Institute, Lagos.
- 2008 (Aug) Figuratively Speaking, Goethe Institut, Lagos. (Solo Show)
- 2009 Burn Down The Earth (Solo Show)
- 2009 Imaginary Line, Video Art Show
- 2010 Identity: An Imagined State, Video Art Show

MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:

Society Of Nigerian Artists. (SNA)



: Point of Departure



Friends I (detail)



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Directions

Tottenham Hale (Victoria Line) (5 mins walk)

Buses to Tottenham: 41, 192, 230, 123

Turn left from the station and walk up Ferry Lane, continue past the lights and turn left at Heron House into Hale Wharf.

Access is at LEE VALLEY, the pontoon gate.

for more information, please contact:

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