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The Asele Period in Uche Okeke's Creativity 1958-1966 (Pp. 261-275)

Chukueggu, Chinedu C. - Department of Fine Arts and Design, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria
E-mail: chineduchukueggu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Asele Period is a research study of a major aspect of the creative works of Professor Uche Okeke. The artist, who is generally regarded as father of modern Nigerian art tradition, has made various giant strides in the creative development of the country. He is naturally endowed with skill and good knowledge of the traditional mythology, belief system and customs of his Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria. He has effectively explored them in the development of visual arts in the country. These contributions to a great extent, transformed the face of visual art in Nigeria. This study therefore substantially represents the creative works of the artist during the period under review. Uche Okeke classified his artistic career into three major dispensations, the researcher has therefore adopted same format in his study so as to properly key into the creative legend's classification of his artworks and career development. The Asele period has indepthly reviewed the activities of the artist locally and internationally between 1958 and 1966. It discusses the artist's inspiration as well as the cultural and symbolic inclination of his artworks. It also reviews the iconographic presentation of the artworks which the artist keyed into his Igbo mythology. The artist's major works in the Asele Period is also articulated in a catalogue

Keywords: Igbo folklore, Oja Suite, Munich Suite, Metaphoric Roles, Line Drawings.

Introduction

Asele in Igbo traditional mythology is a mythical designer. She derives her creative ability from the mother goddess, *Ala* or *Ana*, which in Igbo mythology is the mainspring of creativity. *Asele* is the finest designer in the *Uli* art idiom. This attribute originated from the spirit world (*Ala-muo*) and was translated to the physical world (*Ala-madu*). *Asele* therefore, is not a coinage or a name invented by Uche Okeke to categorize the periodization of his art. She typifies the best qualities of the designer, namely the aesthetic and ethical conscience of the Earth Mother *Ala* or *Ana*, in Igbo traditional mythology, (Uche Okeke 1982:53). Uche Okeke claims to have drawn inspiration from *Asele*. He therefore, rededicates himself to the creative forces – *Ala* or *Ana*, who traditionally inspires creativity. Also inspiring in the creative life of Uche Okeke is *Budunka*, who is traditionally believed to be *Asele*'s male counterpart.

In authenticating his strong belief in Igbo folktales and mythology Uche Okeke (1959:15), has classified folktales into two major headings, they are:

- (i) *Akuko Ndichie*, which are mainly the tales of heroic adventures, myths, legends, as well as stories about the Igbo rural life.
- (ii) *Iro* or *Akuko na egwu*, these are song tales, which in most cases have peculiar choruses. The chanted tales have very strong rhythms and are really the gems of the traditional Igbo folk music.

However, there is a third category, which comprises of a combination of the *Akuko Ndichie* and *Akuko na egwu*. This category is often accompanied with riddles and folktales based on nature or the environment. Uche Okeke (1959:16) rightly noted that the above traditionally serve as both media of instruction and entertainment. Animals involved in the folktales play very prominent and symbolic roles. They play metaphoric roles as if they were human beings – walk, talk, express emotions, and even instruct wisely when the need arises. Prominent animals in the folktales are, the tortoise, tiger, squirrel, cat, eagle, hawk and toad. Also, occasionally included in some of the tales are the witches, who usually personify wickedness and *mamiwata* (the beautiful queen of the water).

The Asele Inspiration

In the *Asele* Period, Uche Okeke articulated the indepth philosophical and symbolic meanings of the Igbo folk tales and applied it in developing his unique artistic forms and concepts. This is very evident mainly in his drawings, which he regards as very symbolic. In appraising his artworks in a solo exhibition in 1959 at Zaria, he had affirmed that:

My drawings are symbolic. They are based upon primitive plastic art and especially upon old Nigerian sculptured pieces. I have tried to depict the haziness and traditional tales, which often confuse man and beast and mix up real life with the dream world and I have attempted to capture the spirit of the dim and distant past of which Ibo folk tales are representative...
Uche Okeke (1959:16)

Okeke's art, no doubt, has its roots in his Igbo cultural background. He has effectively utilized the folklore of his people in developing his style of art. This, according to Okpu Eze (1995:12), sharpened his thoughts and creative imaginations, which today has led him to 'great leap and imprint he has left as his legacy'. The Igbo folkloric characters are captivatingly integrated in every aspect of his creativity without provoking monotony in his artworks. The *Asele* period therefore is obviously the foundation platform from where whatever achievement or progress he made had stemmed from.

The period was the greatest and most challenging dispensation in Uche Okeke's career. It was in this period that he experimented extensively on the use of Igbo cultural elements in his creative works. Here also, he began intense artistic exploration into Igbo *Uli* art idiom. Between 1958 and 1959 alone, he created over eighty-five drawings in pen and ink. These included the representations of various forms of human heads, as well as his self-portrait. Though the facial features of the images appeared caricatured, they were individually very distinct. He named the artwork *Nok Suite* based on his Northern Nigerian experience, particularly at the Jos National Museum, where he worked. There he was fascinated with the simple but interesting facial striations of the traditional sculptures on display. Also, it was at this period that he produced the famous *Oja Suite*, a superlative combination of abstract drawings of various flora forms and human faces in *Uli* style. *Oja Suite* was produced in Abule Oja, in Lagos, while he was processing his travel documents to Germany in 1962.

Uche Okeke traveled to West Germany in 1962 on a fellowship award by the host government. He studied mosaic and stained glass window techniques and visited theatres, museums, art galleries and art schools in that country. He was attached to Franze Mayer Firm in Munich. The Factory specialized in mosaic and stained glass productions. At the time of his arrival in West Germany, the factory was involved in a contract to replace several stained glass and mosaic doors and windows destroyed in Germany during the Second World War. He explained that he gained so much because he met the factory at the peak of its production. At Mayer's Workshop, he created mosaic flowers in a vase, as well as several other mosaic and stained glass artworks. Prominent among them were fourteen *Stations of the Cross*, *Madona and Child* and *Christs' Entry in Nimo*.

The *Munich Suite* was another set of thought provoking artworks he produced in Germany. A striking quality in Uche Okeke's creativity is that he never allowed the German influence to distort his vision; instead he utilized the experience positively. For instance, majority of the works he produced in Germany still reflected in stronger terms his Nigerian cultural background.

On his return from Germany in 1963, tireless Uche Okeke became the Art Director of the Mbari Art Centre in Enugu. The art centre was located at Agbani Road; Some members of the Zaria Art Society were also involved in the Enugu Workshop. They include Oseloka Osadebe and Ogbonnaya Nwagbara. Young talented artists were trained in various media of expression in the visual art at the Centre. It was also in the Asele Period that he drew the illustrations for two famous books by Nigerian authors. They are, the 1962 edition of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and later *The Only Son* by John Munonye (1966). It must be noted however, that the Asele dispensation in the art of Uche Okeke was a period of great exploration, development, and assertion of clear stylistic identity that was very vital in his career. This he successfully achieved. It will therefore, be difficult if not impossible to iconographically describe or make a run down of every piece of Uche Okeke's artworks during this period. We shall, however select some of his major works in various media of approach for the purpose of iconographic analysis.

Iconographic Presentation of Uche Okeke's Mythical Artworks

One of the prominent works produced during this period was *Kpurujarara*. Here he adopted a toad-like concept in total abstraction. Circular lines treated in various small sizes round the body of the artwork, were also used in

creating depth, light and shade. The fearful looking creature has its mouth wide open, therefore, exposing its very long triangular dentition. Lines were also employed in administering the curved horns, which appear like a tree branch. The forelegs, visibly stressed by the bulky frame of the animal, portray a longitudinal line concept.

The *Wicked Witch*, was another artwork produced in this period, the folkloric concept of the *Witch* as both wicked and ugly was translated into two-dimensional visual presentation. Also, a masterly abstraction of forms and lines characterized the drawings. Like the *Kpurujarara*, the *Wicked Witch* is in pen and ink. A careful look at the distorted drawing reveals about eight different line-forms created in a single artwork, which still conveyed the desired intention of the artist. The protruding head of the artwork, which appears spiral, is keyed into the left eye socket, another set of darker longitudinal lines separate the two bulging eyes of the figure, He applied dots on the busts of *Witch*, as well as the hands. The awful looking *Witch* brandishes her long dangerous nails, with which she clutches and destroys her preys. Uche Okeke also introduces a deep set of thin vertical lines on the torso and the legs of the *Wicked Witch*. The emphasis on the intestine of the *Witch* lends credence to the traditional belief that she is merciless and readily swallows her victims.

Greedy Mbe was also produced in the Asele period. Over 12 different line concepts were used in illustrating various captivating forms and shapes in the drawing. The tortoise (*Mbe*) appears in many Igbo folktales. Some evoke myth, while others abhor laziness and greed. On a general note, however, the tortoise is regarded as the craftiest and most prudent of all animals. Uche Okeke has carefully manifested these traits in the *Greedy Mbe* as represented. The animal, in its craftiness, tries to outwit others in the sharing of the food before them.

The *Great Alusi* is another of Uche Okeke's outstanding drawing in pen and ink. The complexity of the shrine where the *Great Alusi* resides is very typical of his drawing. Multiple forms created in a single drawing through the careful manipulation of pen and ink, compounds easy identification of the distorted oracle. In the calligraphic drawing, the *Alusi* spits fire on the bones of his victims as he stretches out hands to grab them. In Igbo traditional society as reflected in folktales, high moral attitude is required. *Arusi* is generally feared. The worst type of crimes, such as murder, incest and stealing were punishable by clubbing the offender to death. In such cases, the

corpses are dragged away from their homes and cast into the dreaded evil groves. The oracle also, protects the land, and metes out appropriate punishments to dubious characters in the society. It never mattered, whether the crimes were committed in secret or not, the oracle must obviously act. For this reason, there was peace and tranquility in the land. Traditional Igbo society depended absolutely on the soil for survival and yet sanity pervaded its entire spectrum of the traditional life. Uche Okeke captures the oracle in pen and ink reflecting above attributes.

Generally, the expressive manners of the movements that accompany his drawing are very firm and stable. Although, some of his compositions in the Asele period were almost idealized out of recognition, the artist still remained glued to his *Uli* art idiom irrespective of the medium of expression. The elements of design, particularly line, provided Uche Okeke the basic tools with which he interpreted concepts and forms in his drawings.

In reflecting natural environment, which is a major focus in his creativity, he had in 1966 conceptualized what *Rural Development* should look like. Okeke vehemently objects to the palatial structures in the so-called Government Reserved Areas carved out by the Nigerian government. To him, it is a continuation of the European Quarters inherited from the colonial masters. This structural development in urban areas, separates such occupants from the realities of life in the rural areas where they come from. He campaigns in his drawings for rural development through an aggressive housing policy, which will reduce mass urban migration. The drawing is of a storey building overwhelmingly surrounded by trees in a village setting. Two female figures walk towards the structure in admiration of a new housing policy, which accommodates rural people.

Various forms of lines and shapes were employed in achieving the semi abstract illustration. This is one of the last drawings of the artist in the Asele dispensation. Perhaps, the Nigerian civil war, which forced the family of the artist to return to their village, may have informed the drawing in 1966. A critical look at his drawings clearly reveals that the artist has an inquisitiveness, which informs his creative search. This is coupled with his strong and unwavering conviction on the direction of his creativity right from childhood.

His artworks were not limited to drawings in pen and ink alone. Uche Okeke also produced several paintings and he is still painting. They include, *Crucifixion*. The artwork has dominant effect of deep blues reflecting

emotion. It is also characterized by forest forms and even though the complementary colour effect on the painting is deep, the presentation is still very sharp. It is typical of the fauvist style of painting in Europe in the 17th Century. This approach clearly reflects his stylistic trade mark, which he has maintained it till date. Other works produced by this great artist during the Asele period include *Aba Revolt*, *The Conflict (After Achebe)*, *Refugee Family*, *The Politician*, *The Burning Images*, *The Midnight Cry* and *Ugolochanma*. Others are: *Jumma*, *Bird of Time*, *Ogbanje (Oyoyo)*, and *Efuru*.

Uche Okeke's oil paintings have varied subject matters. Initially, Northern Nigerian cultural identity, traditional, symbols, motifs, architectural forms and landscapes were prominently reflected in his works. This, obviously, was as a result of the Zaria influence. *Ugolochanma* was produced in 1965. It is a moderate oil painting of Uche Okeke's concept of his Igbo traditional beauty. It typifies the Igbo concept of the beauty of the female folk. Sharp contrasting colours are employed to showcase both beauty and submission. The long-necked traditional Igbo female figure further attracts attention with eye-catching necklace, large earrings and hairstyle.

The Aba Revolt, *Conflict (After Achebe)* are another set of the large oil paintings produced by the artist towards the end of the Asele period. In the *Aba Revolt* the artist appears to have slowed down his previously acknowledged application of sharp contrasting colours. Here he paints, in subdued abstraction, raging Igbo women with large breasts. The painting is in reference to the Aba Women Revolt of 1929 against the colonial imposition of obnoxious taxes in Eastern Nigeria. The revolt had spread to several towns in the then Eastern Region. Properties worth millions of *Naira* were destroyed in the process. The figures have dominance of dark brown with patches of red. The Central figure in the painting displays larger breasts than others. She is traditionally referred to as *Nwanyi Mgbolodiala* – the mythological Igbo woman of the giant breasts. She radiates great courage and strength which epitomizes the Igbo amazon, the Igbo version of the Queen Amina of Zaria. *Nwanyi Mgbolodiala* is reputed to be capable of placing her breasts on her back and could even sit on them. Traditionally it is difficult to pacify angry women when they remove their blouses in anger. One is naturally confused about how to stop them. Only the elders of the land or the compound could pacify them. The woman's breasts in the traditional setting are regarded as strong weapons of female power. They use them in subduing the male folk and venting anger. Uche Okeke has articulated the above

concept in his painting using the application of predominantly dark brown with slight touches of red. The entire painting is completely abstract.

In the *Conflict (After Achebe)*, which is another oil painting almost abstracted beyond recognition, the artist paints a scene from a popular novel, *Things Fall Apart*. This also tallies with one of Uche Okeke's published poems-*Kpaaza*. It was a sacred spring, close to his family home in Nimo, which some local Christians had threatened to destroy through fishing. Uche Okeke demonstrated in this painting, his disgust at the attitude of the new Christian converts in destroying Igbo tradition. In the artwork, the *Egwugwu* masqueraders and dancers on a retaliatory mission, move towards a Church, also in the distance, to set it ablaze. Two Christian worshippers, a priest and a lady, are standing in total confusion at the entrance of the Church. Even though Okeke's works are generally in abstracts, his colour rhythms are very carefully employed to reflect the moods of the subject matter, whether they are discernible or not. His emphasis on sharp and dark colours effectively balances his compositions.

Finally, Uche Okeke concludes the Asele period with *Refugee Family* and *Returnees* created in linocuts. In the *Returnees*, he reflects man's inhumanity to man, as experienced by the Igbo ethnic group in Northern Nigeria in 1966. The *Returnees*, most of who were born in that part of the country, suddenly came back home empty handed to trace their kiths and kins. The images raise their hands in total surrender to their fate. Some of the images are almost naked, showing the circumstances under which they escaped from the insecurity and mass killings, which pervaded that part of the country in 1966. Uche Okeke's family was victim of this pogrom and the consequent exodus of Easterners from Northern Nigeria.

The *Refugee Family* is a linocut print. It is the artist's assessment of the situation in the Eastern part of the country in 1966. He depicts a displaced family suffering from malnutrition occasioned by hardship. The haggard and hungry-looking family of eight appears to have lost hope of any means of livelihood. In both the *Returnees Family* and *The Refugee Family*, the artist creatively drew the attention of the outside world to the living conditions in Eastern Nigeria. He decries the fast deteriorating conditions of the returnees, who have suddenly become refugees in their country. It is possible that the artist employed the linocut medium, which guarantees quick mass production for wider circulation of the artworks. Incidentally these artworks were selected in 1968, as part of the Biafran war propaganda exhibited abroad.

The table below is a catalogue of some of the major artworks produced by the artist during the Asele Period. As stated earlier, it will not be possible to catalogue all the works produced by this great artist in any of the five periods of his career. However, he has made available to us some of the records he was able to trace. Many of them were either commissioned or acquired by art collectors. However, some of his very prominent artworks are also on display at the art gallery of the Asele Institute in Nimo.

Table 1: Catalogue of Some of Uche Okeke's Major Artworks in the Asele Period

S/N	Title of Artwork	Medium of Execution	Size	Place of Execution	Date
1	<i>Kpurujarara</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
2	<i>The Wicked Witch</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
3	<i>The Beast, Omalido</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
4	<i>Nza the Smart</i>	pen and ink	25 x 29.5cm	Zaria	1958
5	<i>Nkwo's Price</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
6	<i>Ojadili</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
7	<i>Uzummuo (the spirit blacksmith)</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
8	<i>Onalu</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
9	<i>Dibia and the Heartless Hag</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
10	<i>The Orphan</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
11	<i>The Missing Cubs</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
12	<i>Lament of the Funerary Cult (Igbo folk tales)</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
13	<i>Akaege's Tears</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
14	<i>Akio's Fate</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
15	<i>The Great Alusi</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
16	<i>A Maiden's Cry</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
17	<i>Aniga's Water Yam</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
18	<i>Doomed Udeme</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
19	<i>Greedy Mbe</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
20	<i>Eze's Bird</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
21	<i>Wrestling Beasts</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
22	<i>Iyama, the Monster</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
23	<i>Adaeze the Princess</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
24	<i>Beggar (in Nok</i>	pen and ink	19 x 12cm	Jos	1958

	<i>suite)</i>				
25	<i>Self Contemplation (in Nok suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 12.6cm	Jos	1958
26	<i>After Christopher's Early Photograph (in Nok suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 12.6cm	Jos	1958
27	<i>Man with Forked Beard and Moustache (in Nok suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 12.6cm	Jos	1958
28	<i>Sailing Boats</i>	brush and ink	5.5cm	Zaria	1959
29	<i>Profile Of An Idiot</i>	carbon pencil	27 x 15cm	Zaria	1959
30	<i>Profile of Udo</i>	carbon pencil	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1959
31	<i>Almajiri</i>	wood	91.2cm	Zaria	1959
32	<i>Portrait of a Youth</i>	carbon pencil	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1959
33	<i>Animal Heads with Horns</i>	black chalk	35.4 x 24.9cm	Zaria	1959
34	<i>Heads and Faces</i>	pen and ink	14 x 19cm	Zaria	1958
35	<i>Bark Designs</i>	pen and ink	14 x 19cm	Zaria	1958
36	<i>Eru Gerere</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Zaria	1958
37	<i>Fabled Brute</i>	oil on hardboard		Zaria	1959
38	<i>Egbenuoba</i>	pen and ink	27.5 x 18.8cm	Zaria	1959
39	<i>Madonna</i>	charcoal	33.5 x 27.7cm	Lagos	1960
40	<i>Independa</i>	carbon pencil	23.9 x 23.8cm	Lagos	1960
41	<i>Kagoro Mission Landscape</i>	charcoal	37.7 x 25.9cm	Zaria	1960
42	<i>Portrait of Uli Artist</i>	pen and ink	23 x 15cm	Zaria	1960
43	<i>Sketch for Torture</i>	carbon pencil	23 x 15cm	Zaria	1960
44	<i>Forest Road</i>	charcoal	23 15cm	Zaria	1960
45	<i>Mai Gwoje</i>	pen and ink	30.5 x 18.7cm	Zaria	1960
46	<i>Forest Road</i>	charcoal	23 x 15cm	Zaria	1960
47	<i>Agwoi</i>	oil on board	122 x 61cm	Zaria	1961
48	<i>Aquarium</i>	pen and ink	17.1 x 12cm	Zaria	1961
49	<i>Dilemma of a No-Worker</i>	pen and ink	18.2 x 13.9cm	Zaria	1961
50	<i>Profile of a Beggar</i>	charcoal	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1961
51	<i>Jumat Prayer</i>	oil on board	91.2 x 122cm	Zaria	1961
52	<i>Waiting For a Bus</i>	charcoal	45.2 x 30.3cm	Zaria	1961
53	<i>Jumma</i>	oil on board	91.44 x 121.92cm	Zaria	1961
54	<i>Amuma</i>	pen and ink	37.4 x 25.9cm	Zaria	1962
55	<i>Munich Girl</i>	charcoal	27.3 x 40.5cm	Zaria	1962

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56	<i>Solitary Homestead</i>	pen and ink	22.2 x 17.9cm	Zaria	1962
57	<i>The Place of Struggles</i>	pen and ink	27.9 x 19cm	Zaria	1962
58	<i>Wisemen From the East</i>	crayon	28.1 x 19.1cm	Zaria	1962
59	<i>Portrait of Mon</i>	brush and ink	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1962
60	<i>Beggar Sitting</i>	charcoal	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1962
61	<i>Model Sitting</i>	charcoal	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1962
62	<i>Highlife Politician</i>	pen and ink	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1962
63	<i>Punishment</i>	pen and ink	30.5 x 23cm	Zaria	1962
64	<i>Owls</i>	pen and ink	23 x 15cm	Zaria	1962
65	<i>Mother and Daughter</i>	pen and ink	23 x 15cm	Zaria	1962
66	<i>Embracing (in Oja suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 14cm	Zaria	1962
67	<i>Woman With Headtie (in Oja suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 14cm	Zaria	1962
68	<i>Head of a Girl (in Oja suite)</i>	pen and ink	19 x 14cm	Zaria	1962
69	<i>From the Forest, (in Oja suite)</i>	gouache	19 x 14cm	Zaria	1962
70	<i>Edge of the Primeval Forest</i>	gouache	56 x 38cm	Zaria	1962
71	<i>Christ</i>	gouache	46 x 30.5cm	Zaria	1962
72	<i>Crucifixion</i>	charcoal	49.5 x 38cm	Munich	1962
73	<i>Ana, Mamiwata</i>	charcoal	46.5 x 39cm	Munich	1962
74	<i>The Fallen Wall</i>	brush and ink	27.5 x 41cm	Munich	1962
75	<i>Birds in Flight (in Munich suite)</i>	brush and ink	51 x 38cm	Munich	1962
76	<i>Girl with Flowing Hair (in Munich suite)</i>	brush and ink	38 x 14cm	Munich	1962
77	<i>11 Stations of the Cross</i>	gouache	51 x 38cm	Munich	1963
78	<i>14 Panels of Stations of the Cross</i>	natural stone and glass mosaic	No stated	Munich	1963
79	<i>Christ Entry into Nimo</i>	stained glass	Not stated	Munich	1963
80	<i>Mosaic Flower in a Vase</i>	stained glass	Not stated	Munich	1963
81	<i>Madam of Munich</i>	brush and ink	Not stated	Munich	1963
82	<i>The Flight</i>	crayon	23.5 x 24cm	Munich	1963
83	<i>From the Primeval Forest</i>	brush and ink	30 x 28cm	Munich	1963

84	<i>Dancers</i>	pen and ink	15 x 10cm	Munich	1963
85	<i>Stage Designs</i>	pen and ink	Not stated	Enugu	1964
86	<i>Apolonia</i>	carbon pencil	37 x 25.9cm	Enugu	1965
87	<i>Palm Grove</i>	pen and ink	30 x 29cm	Enugu	1965
88	<i>Sketch for Aba Revolt</i>	carbon pencil	30.5 x 23cm	Enugu	1965
89	<i>Ugolochanma</i>	oil on board	76.5 x 50cm	Enugu	1965
90	<i>The Conflict (After Achebe)</i>	oil on board	121.92x 91.44cm	Enugu	1965
91	<i>Aba Revolt</i>	oil on board	182.88x 121.92cm	Enugu	1965
92	<i>Kate</i>	oil on board	91.2 x 61cm	Enugu	1965
93	<i>The Politician</i>	oil on board	Not stated	Enugu	1965
94	<i>The Burning Images</i>	oil on board	Not stated	Enugu	1965
95	<i>The Midnight Cry</i>	oil on board	Not stated	Enugu	1965
96	<i>The Soup Pot of Mbe</i>	pen and ink	20.3 x 15.1cm	Enugu	1966
97	<i>Te He-Goat and Man People</i>	pen and ink	20.3 x 15.1cm	Enugu	1966
98	<i>Rural Development</i>	pen and ink	28.7 x 12.2cm	Enugu	1966
99	<i>Birds in Flight</i>	pen and ink	15 x 23cm	Enugu	1966
100	<i>Demagogue</i>	pen and ink	23 x 15cm	Enugu	1966
101	<i>Refugee Family</i>	linocut	41 x 35cm	Enugu	1966
102	<i>Returnees</i>	linocut	42 x 23cm	Enugu	1966

Courtesy Uche Okeke

Also provided below is a list of artworks purchased by Harmon Foundation, in New York in the United States of America from Uche Okeke on October 4, 1963. The check-in-sheet was recently reproduced for the artist from the collections of the manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, in Washington DC. It has detailed information about the title, the sizes and the prices at which the Foundation purchased the fourteen artworks. Evelyn S. Brown, the Foundation's Assistant Director, signed the document.

Table 2: List of Artworks Purchased by the Harmon Foundation in New York in 1963

SN	Title of Artwork	Size	Price
1	<i>Mbe's Sister</i>	27.94 x 19.05cm	\$70
2	<i>Odede and Omarudo</i>	19.05 x 27.94cm	\$70
3	<i>Youthful Thinker</i>	27.94 x 40.64cm	\$56

4	<i>Anah (sic) (Earth-Mother) and Mamiwata (mermaid)</i>	27.94 x 40.64cm	\$56
5	<i>Mothers with Plant of Life</i>	22.23 x 34.29cm	\$56
6	<i>Mothers Return</i>	29.21 x 39.37cm	\$56
7	<i>The Enchanted Drummer</i>	19.69 x 34.93cm	\$56
8	<i>From the Primeval Grove I</i>	22.86 x 34.29cm	\$56
9	<i>From the Primeval Grove II</i>	22.86 x 34.29cm	\$56

Courtesy Uche Okeke

Conclusion

On a general note, therefore, whether the artworks were produced as painting, drawing in pen and ink, charcoal or even linocut, the distinguishing line qualities in Okeke's creativity are very lucid and have unobstruction of rhythmic flow, which tallies with the forms, concepts and the original style of the artist. This he manipulates through different ways to achieve his desired goal. Uche Okeke remained glued to his Igbo-Uli art idiom irrespective of the media of approach in the Asele period. Colour flamboyance obviously played key role in defining areas of emphasis in his paintings. This same trait is a general tendency associated with the linear pictographic symbolism of Igbo traditional art. The Asele Dispensation was no doubt a very busy period in the creative life of the legendary artist. It was indeed one of the most productive periods in his creative career.

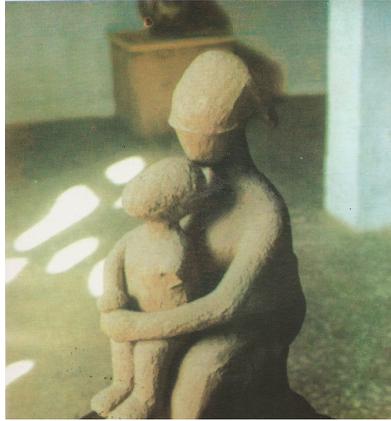


Plate 1: Uche Okeke: **Mother and Child**, Fired Clay, 1958.
Courtesy: The Artist



Plate 2: Uche Okeke: **Uko, The Warrior**, Pen and Ink, 1959

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