

CHUCK GALLERY – THE FOURTH DIMENSION

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Seeing in black and White is the third Art Exhibition by Chuck Gallery within a period of six months. For anyone who understands the intricacies of identifying the artist(s) to showcase, putting up an art exhibition and attracting art lovers and collectors, Chuck Gallery is moving at the speed of light. How does this happen? It is obvious that art galleries do not curate themselves. So who/what enables the artist, his work and art lovers to interface within the space which we know as CHUCK GALLERY?

The latest paradigm in Community Development which is taking the world by storm is the ABCD model, a.k.a Asset Based Community Development model. Its primary tool is “asset mapping”, which simply means the identification, mobilisation and utilisation of local assets in order to improve community cohesion. The model works with four key assets namely: individuals, associations, institutions and physical assets. These assets share one commonality – their existence in a human world of five senses. However, there is a 'hidden' component – the CONNECTION - the lighting rod which enlivens and harnesses the Intention set, ab initio; the dream dreamer or the dream keeper. In the Native American Sweat Lodge tradition, she/he is called the Fire Keeper. This is the individual who arrives hours ahead of everyone to set up the fire which “cooks” until red hot, a minimum of twenty-eight granite boulders, ladles them into the Prayer Circle, and stands alone outside in the darkest of coldest nights, keeping watch and working effortlessly so that others may experience, undisturbed, the ecstasy of the Sweat Lodge.

It is right to say that every successful endeavour has a Fire Keeper and, it is my sheer delight to write about the Dream Keeper, the human face of Chuck Gallery - Mr. Chukwudi Onwudiwe.

When he asked me to write this Foreword, he sent me two seamlessly crafted samples from the first two exhibitions. However, I choose instead to use this space to say “thank you” to him for two reasons. First, gratitude is the key to the Heart of God for it enables access to the Fourth Dimension or the zone of Infinite Possibilities. Second, for the passion and expertise with which he runs Chuck Gallery, thus ensuring that we can gather, meet with, build functional human networks and be part of a magical experience; within an ambient and welcoming space, which when you step in, you do not want to leave in any haste.

In actualising the vision of Chuck Gallery, Onwudiwe answered the yearning of the artist (and his/her work) for visibility; and ours, for the opportunity to be part of a wider community of like-minded individuals with access to works of art which, may otherwise have not come into our peripheral vision. I have witnessed Onwudiwe at work and it is easy to see he has no vision of the potentials of Chuck Gallery . . . the vision has him! His zeal, attention to details, professionalism and willingness to ensure that we get the best from his collaborators are amazing. The strong suites which I find most admirable about this young man are humility, teach-ability and sense of gratitude for patronage, no matter how small.

A look at the pieces on exhibition speaks eloquently to his eyes for good arts. How does he know which ones to chose? I find myself musing. Good art is the 4th Dimension stuff... pure space unhindered by human time constructs... the sacred meeting point where past and future interface in NOW... albeit for a split second. Good art, at its best can be starkly and unpretentiously eloquent, it gently coerces us to stop... albeit for a split second and experience the magic of being alive. It unlocks something powerful in us, enabling the heart to sing with it, dance with it, cry with it and die, joyfully, with it. It remains a part of you once you have experienced its eternal radiance and beauty. You may not take it home yet you are joy-filled for the one who does - it binds us together

and it will not let you forget. In a good piece the artist, his medium and the appreciator become one triune of (W)holiness, co-existing in timelessness and all isms are obliterated. Chris Echeta, one of Nigeria's foremost ceramic artists articulates these sentiments when he writes: The primordial vestiges of form exploration reside in the mental environment. It is the intangible arena where all designs, a part of which form exploration is, are negotiated. The explorative restiveness of this terrain cannot be accessed by the five physical senses. Until these thoughts are "downloaded" into the physical world, they remain private and unshared property of the creative plenipotentiary (the artist) and, in this case, the ceramic artist. (The ceramic artist and his clay: Chris Echeta discusses the relationship of form exploration, 2011).

Good art must haunt the viewer out of every day complacency. I heard in every brush stroke of Damola Adepoju, Mother's voice calling me home to roost...Unleashing relentless tidal waves of longing reminding the prodigal that...I must go from this aching loneliness of my self-imposed exile.

Finally, we know that behind every 4th Dimension is a 5th, the rudder which steadies, the friend who believes in and orchestrate the best; the lover who affords one the space and peace of mind for creativity to thrive. IFEOMA, just writing your name brings smiles to my lips. You hold the fort while he forages to bring beauty into our homes. You take the prize for silently and seamlessly juggling demanding roles – friend, wife, lover, mother, medical doctor and quintessential cook. Girl, you make me proud to be an Igbo woman. Ifeoma Onwudiwe, you are the Fire Keeper's FIRE. Thank you.