

# RANDOM PHOTO JOURNAL



ISSUE N°1

A WAY OF SEEING

**JEEP URBAN**











# **RANDOM PHOTO JOURNAL**

*A daily study by Arinzechukwu Patrick*

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# Power of a Random Photo

A retentive memory is good but photographic records of each memory is pleasanter. Inspired by predecessors, this train of Random Thoughts led me to Random Photo Journal.

I have based in Ghana since the age of fourteen and so the idea of photojournalism came with a need to tour different states in Nigeria to better understand an origin I forgot. After poring at the first series of photographs I realized the work was bigger than keeping personal records.

Since February 2017 I have documented spaces around me as an immigrant trying to study his environment. It was a phase until late in April that same year when I met AfroGallonism (Serge Attukwei Clottey) at his Dzorwulu studio for my blog The Random Thoughts. We spoke at length about his art and early foundations, in the room was also Ashanti Immigrant (Nana Osei Kwadwo) who happens to be an experienced photojournalist, but I didn't know at the time. In the two months, working as a hobbyist I realized documenting was what I wanted to do long term. I say that because I studied accounting in the university!

Random Photo Journal is a public record, a way of seeing, a study of the daily lives of people in their habitat and a visual explanation of their immediate environment.

As a writer I know words can go a long way but a photograph will travel a longer road.

If anything, Random Photo Journal is not a travel magazine, how can it be? it is not an invitation to spend your yearly vacation I am simply saying: This is us, we exist and this is how and where we live.

In this *Random* publication, we will be looking at works from Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, France, The United States and Amsterdam. They are all special features!

Arinzechukwu Patrick, editor-in-chief.







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A man poses in front of a truck filled with baskets.  
Kogi, January 2019, Nigeria



# Nigerians at malls

*Caleb Ajinomoh*





Noise. Principally, I feel different about malls in Lagos now. They look like roadside kiosks now, compared to America. But, noise. People charge through stores – 90% of these stores are Chinese or South African giants – in a whipped frenzy, carting bags of stuff. But one feels, the mall experience doesn't really come to life until you run into somebody you know. Then you have a good reason to linger and laugh, throw your head back like your braids are getting in the way, usually better if you wear actual braids. Then you have a companion to charge through stores with, somebody to ask their opinion before you decide on a brand of toothpick – which, thankfully, Nigeria does not produce. Maybe the thrill is in running through these stores, watching the manifestation of these imported products, wondering at their constitution, at the intelligence of their makers; after all, they're all visiting Nigeria. Groups of expats, usually Chinese or Lebanese or Indian, move around in clustes, their faces breaking down in phases because it is a kind of art in itself to move between ebullient Nigerians at a mall, especially if your facial constitution is strit. Get in on the noise or get out of the mall. The Chinese usually have no problems adapting their features to the crowd. The Lebanese have a neat strategy: they smile at everyone. The Indians, perhaps banking on their shared colonial paternity with Nigeria, feel a little more entitled, and refuse to join in the commotion. They bounce around in their saris and point their pointed foreheads inside nearby KFC, or Drumstix. The Indians find comfort in food. The Chinese shop like their life depends on it. The Lebanese are prowling for hot young girls, who, thankfully, are also prowling for the rich matured foreign men. Relationship statuses be damned. It's not uncommon to see a boyfriend pacing from store to store, looking for his girlfriend, who was just standing outside the galleria five minutes ago. The Lebanese work fast. Their 'getaway' driver, a local, does the negotiating. If she's really cheap, she won't mind. If she's not, she will insist on getting the Lebanese involved. The security men and women in their faded uniforms have a permanent look of boredom, until they spot a patron they can fuss over for tips. Instances where the patron walks past without leaving them any tip, they hike their noses behind him.

A mother and her children all in matching Sunday outfits, Palms Shopping Mall, Lagos, Nigeria.

## If you're not grateful, you're a great fool

Or, “you can’t attain a high altitude with a low attitude.” Or, “you need praise to get the grace to win the race.” This is something Nigerian pastors do a lot, slap your ears with a combo of familiar words. The church halls ring out with varying tomes of it. Slam poetry. With actual slamming. I always cringe when they engage the congregation like this. I cringe hardest when people yodel “wow” and applaud like a TED talk is occurring. But here’s one that really is profound, “if you’re not grateful, you’re a great fool.” It’s true. And measuredly told. It requires a big gap in knowledge gained and severe lack of big picture-ability to be an ingrate. You cannot be great if you’re an ingrate. Ha ha, you see where I’m going with this. I look back on 2015, when I began to take writing seriously, fondly. Well, truly, not so fondly, because a deer in headlights had better vision than I did. My then girlfriend, a radio broadcaster, quickly saw through what – in her opinion – was my life heading down a blind alley. She left, dancing off with a chunk of my chest. Funny that her departure became my release, my arrival. After she walked away, I was released spectacularly into my artistry. It helps your art, this severe absence of someone to impress. It forced me to expand my world view, and with it, the size of my ambitions. I remember tearing through the entire Paris Review archive. I remember asking literature out. I remember countless dates. More importantly, I remember needing to fight every member of my family for every inch of writing space I needed. Three years later, my ambitions continue to swell. They’ve learned to swell so much they’re now thicker than any romance. I’m grateful that I was not crushed by literature. I’m grateful that I am not a great fool. Oh how great my foolishness would be if I was doing anything but writing today? I’d not trade this life for anyone else’s. I’ll leave that to the great fools out there, who are too busy chasing what’s in front of them they never stop to appreciate where they’re standing. I am grateful for my art, for my friends in corners of the big world, and readers. These days, with a big agent, and two manuscripts brimming with health, literature might be having my babies.





1. Photograph of a traders grains  
Ogbete Market, Enugu, January 2019, Nigeria

2. Owerri, January 2019, Nigeria

3. A girl enjoys a meal in a local restaurant  
Ojuelegba, Shitta, Surulere, December 2018, Lagos





Photograph of a man carrying herbs on his motorcycle  
Imo, Nigeria



A Bulldozer breaks the earth  
Kasoa, Ghana



Men in an uncompleted building  
Kasoa, Ghana



Lokoja traffic,  
Nigeria



A woman pushes a wheelbarrow  
Kogi-East/Enugu, Nigeria



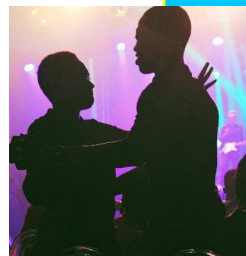
Motorcycles,  
Lokoja, Nigeria



A woman about to spank her son  
Kogi, Nigeria



Krokrobite,  
Ghana



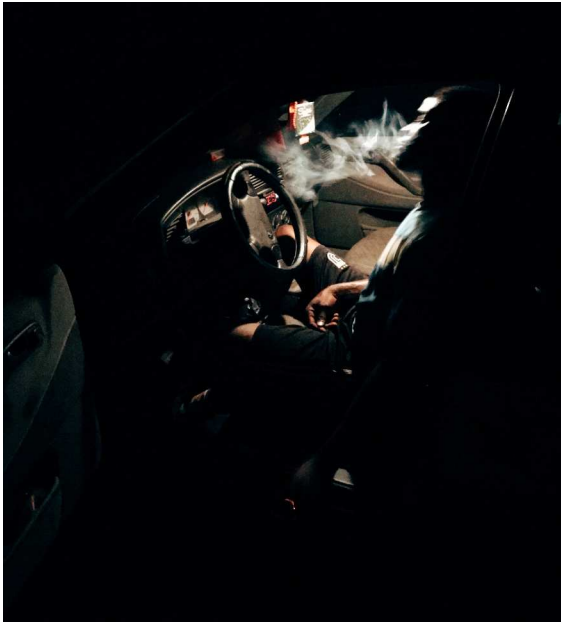
Make music festival  
Eko Hotel, Lagos  
Island, Nigeria



An Ajaokuta steel labourer  
Ajaokuta, Nigeria







Bon appétit!





## All I Listen to These Days

is afrobeats. No jazz, trap, or reggae can do me right & every convo in the group chat is about the latest hits, about Wizkid's vow of commitment, Kwesi Arthur's grind for holiness, & Stonebwoy's reach for a love he can never seem to hold onto long enough & maybe home is a song I can never stop humming maybe home is loose language held together by some sort of electrifying bridge see there the black body's everlasting dance see there how it fills up an otherwise empty stage I think *home* & I want to fall into the arms of a stranger beside me *home* & I rest my head on the hardness of collarbone *home* & I confess "love me still" "make my tongue able"

## Drown or Drought

In Taifa, pee-stained bed sheets hung out on the line for the world to see

we spent our school break waiting for rain  
& then waiting for a ride to the beach

when the rain came first we ran out in herds  
to retrieve the clothes from the line

& then we built a well  
we descended into its mouth

pulled up rain water by the buckets  
& heaven really was the little circle of sky that blinded

the echo of our voices slapped together with laughter  
even when our toes were thick with grime

even when mud lotioned our forearms like a second skin

*Claudia Owusu*





Jamestown British Accra, Ghana



# Surf and Grind Ghana

*Arinzechukwu Patrick*

Sremm skateboarding  
Mile 7, Ghana



Ghana is interested in skateboarding and its gradual acceptance in society is evident, even if skateboarders have been in existence for nearly up to fifteen years. Big medias have documented the rise, Vogue, CNN, BBC, name it. But there was a time when it was thoughtless to ride a wood without folks assuming the circus came to town, daily, people embrace the sport and see it as a way of life. Before, as a matter of fact, they didn't want kids grinding and nose bleeding, cruising down the streets and living in a different way. That representation was lacking, to not be loved and supported by your own country killed the vibes in skateboarding in Ghana. A lot of youth quitted save for a few.

There is a festival called Chale Wote where all the cool kids in Accra, wide and the diaspora love to attend in the summer, a lot of alternative events that attracts over 30,000 people are exhibited. Three years ago, under the sun, cars cruising past, children and women in throngs passing by, a group of skateboarders cruised in public with music blasting as they spun their boards to the clicks of cameras and cheers of onlookers. That happened to be Surf Ghana's



Sandy, Chale Wote 2018, Ghana

first exhibition. That same day in another wing of the area the collective also arranged for a group of international artists to paint 25 skate decks on display in Brazil House, one of the festival's premiere enclosed venues, in addition to tournaments and skate lessons.

Three years ago, a woman worked behind closed doors to put together a collective united by a passion for skate and surf. Sandy Alibo, an indigene of Martinique. She was the sports strategist and communication rep for Orange in extreme sports. Sandy discovered Ghana through

Busua, searching for a place to surf. *"I fell in love and decided to go back to give and invest more. After developing some friendships, I followed my heart and this is how everything started. I decided to leave France to found the collective,"* she explained.

A passion for photography attached Sandy's interests to extreme sports, the stunts and tricks caught on camera, landscapes and architecture. *"If you love the street then you love skateboarding because it is the prince of the street. I love the unconventionality and disorganization of the sport. I am a beginner of both surfing and skating but what I like about it is that nobody cares about your level, more your passion. How you feel in the water, how you feel on the board, and what you can share with that. Another thing about this sport is it inspires travelling in a means to discover new spots."* Surf Ghana is fused with talents: Coaching, photography, carpentry, styling, painting and other forms of artistic expressions.

Ghana is one of the top countries to invest in today, the economy is dynamic and Ghana espouses independence and freedom, the creative scene is also booming. With a cultivated dream to move abroad to work on a social project, Ghana felt like the right place. *"For me it is better because I feel like in society right now we can never do a business and be all about money, or live happily without thinking about others and how they can be happy, even if the project is not to save the world but if you can put a smile, create and give employment and increase life expectancy."*

It is evident that Sandy uses her professional business acumen to generate ideas that sustains the collective. It is rare to see Africans together for a project that is great and of good benefit; Surf Ghana is proof of that. There are also other organizations that support skateboarding in Africa: Skate Ethiopia, League SB, Skateistan, and African skateboarding diary.

Partnerships have helped the collective secure some of their goals which include easy access to extreme sports for the youths in Ghana. The idea of the association was not to fight for inclusion with other sports but to become involved with festivals Ghanaians already love: Asaabako, Chale Wote and Accra food festival and some of them own.

For example, in 2018, they created NOISE, a skateboarding video contest only on afrobeat, to memorialize the relationship between filmmakers and skateboarders.

M.A.S.S.S (Music, Art, Skateboarding and Secret Spot) came next: The idea was to commemorate skateboarding in a secret eco-friendly location.





Through all the exploits one can easily see a dedication to social activism and fight against pollution. An example is a project of beach cleanings in partnership with the University of Takoradi to teach the students how to surf and to clean up after. Since then, there has been a rise in beach cleanings by brands in collaboration with the government.

More than anything, Surf Ghana's Skate Tour changed the way the country perceived skateboarding: 12 days around parts of Ghana to promote tourism and teach children skate culture was a breakthrough project. The collective, and also with the help of other organizations, has imported surfboards, shoes, skateboards and other equipment needed but they aim to be local and eco-friendly. *"The idea is to save the planet, to save money, to create jobs and to avoid the corruption of importation in Africa."*

Everyone is enthusiastic to know what the future holds and based on the aforementioned achievements, definitely, only greatness awaits!





Jacob skateboarding at Mass Botanical Gardens, Accra, Ghana

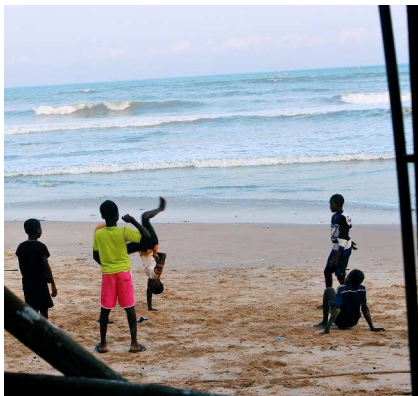


Members of collective at Noise Republic Bar 2018, Accra, Ghana



















"The shit in Shitta", Ojulelejba, Lagos, Nigeria



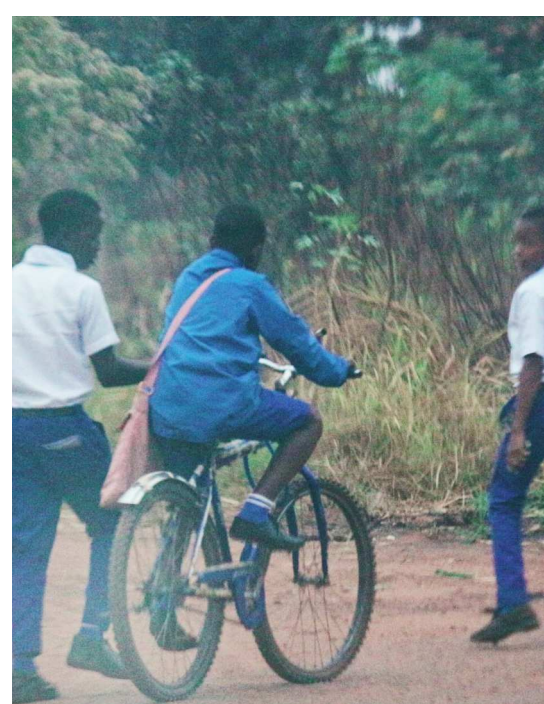
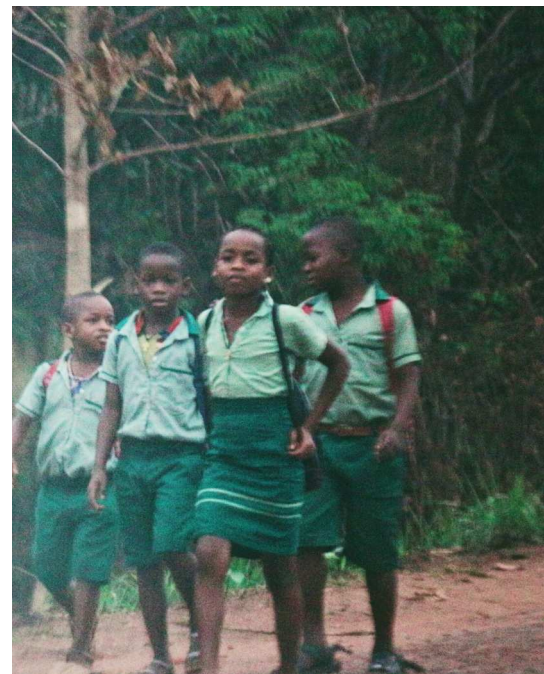
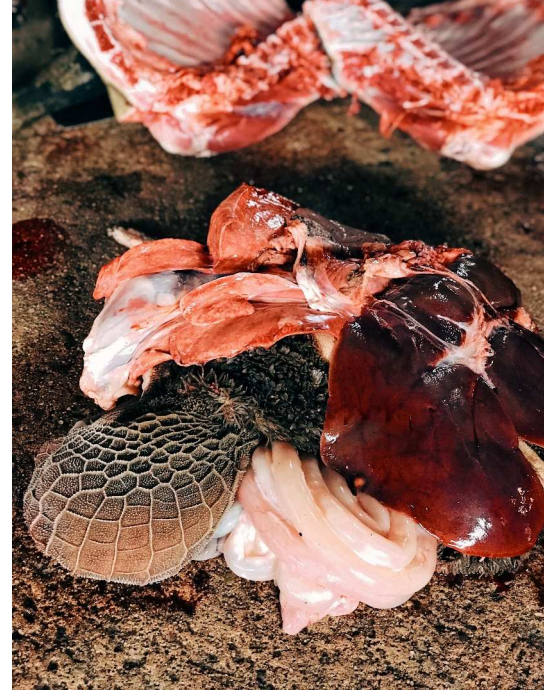
**Random  $\neq$  Spontaneity**















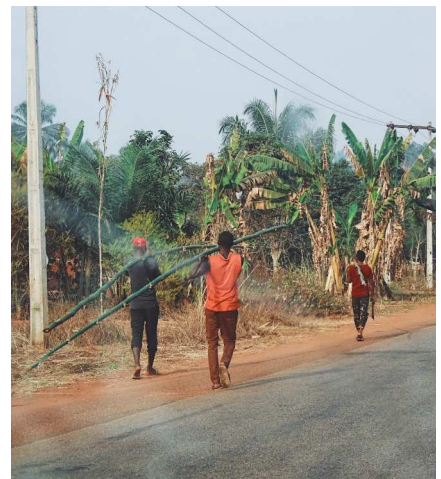
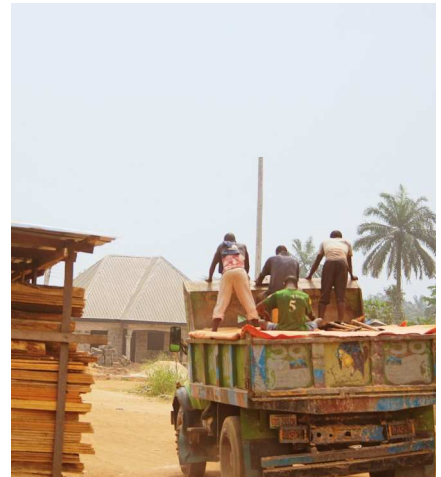
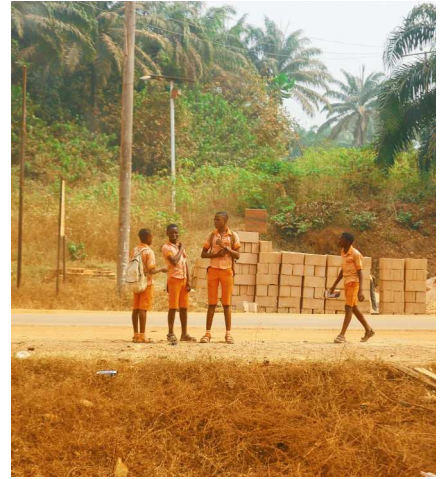
A biker cruising on the bridge at Itobe, a town within the left bank of the Niger River















Recycled plastic, Owerri, Nigeria,







## Cycles

Surely,  
I am my own ancestor  
Reliving past traumas  
All from my many lives  
While chasing rainbows

My past  
My present  
Both running concurrently  
And I try and try  
To stick to one timeline

But being human comes with  
powers  
We live many lives at once  
Live and relive  
The joys and pain

But power isn't strength  
Power is raw, unbridled  
Strength is quiet, insistent  
And I need both if I'm to  
make it

## What of the celebrations?

Do you remember the full moons,  
You know,  
Back in the village  
When village was not a synonym for poor?

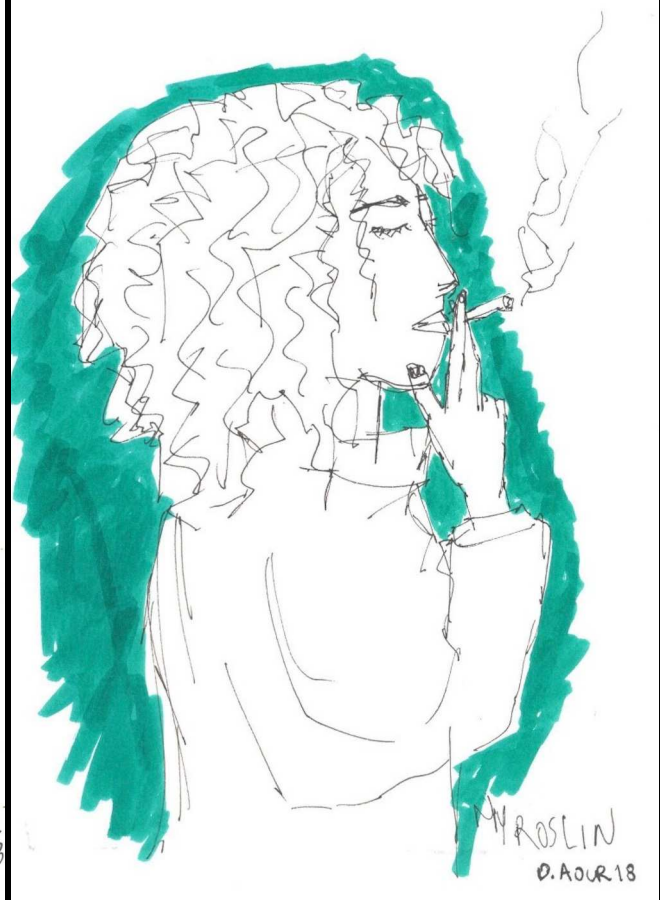
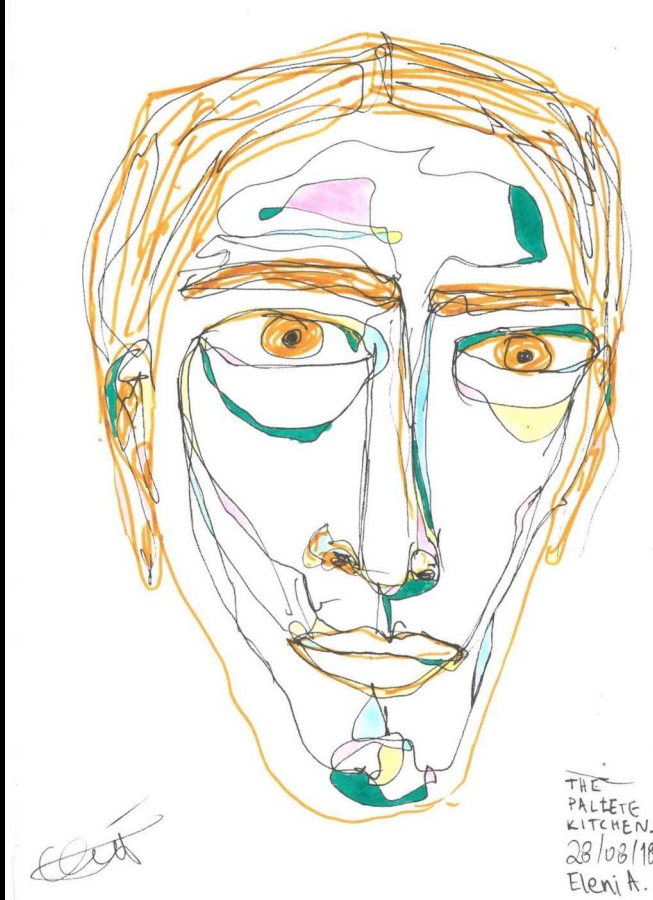
Do you remember  
When they sat at your feet,  
Drinking your wisdom for the ages  
Taking in the very power  
Of your presence?

Do you remember the joy,  
The joy of someone dancing around you,  
Someone basking in the light of your being,  
Back when we still danced,  
or basked,  
Or shined,  
As in being holy?

Do you remember the prayers,  
The desperate and cloying prayers  
Of men who thought they were gods,  
Who had an inkling of being worshipped before?  
Oh, how they prayed,  
They prayed until they wanted to be you,  
To be worshipped,  
And they convinced you  
You were less than  
And you believed,  
Because you believed their silly little prayers!

What god doesn't believe her own power,  
What god needs to be convinced,  
And how long does it take to get back,  
Because we're all waiting,  
Bitch!

Cathrine Chidawanyika



# Line, Colors and Portraits

Elene Anastassiou

I have often contemplated upon how my visual art could be viewed through a more literary perspective and I think some of my work has the potential of being directly related to poetry. Other times I think of my own artistic medium as something completely distinct from other forms. Maybe I am reading too much into the question “**Can you explain the poetry of your art?**” When people ask me this question I tend to blatantly answer with “I don’t know. I just do things”. Maybe *that* is the poetry involved. Maybe it is just a bunch of visual words shuffled around in hopes that they mean something to someone, somewhere. To me my drawings are just another form of expression, much like writing or dancing: a performance if you will. I express myself through colors and forms without consciously thinking about my artistic process at the moment. For me, contemplation comes after. It always has contemplation upon that which was created in a moment where thinking was not of primal importance. In these drawings, I tried formally experimenting with colours and shapes and how background and foreground can merge together in a two-dimensional way creating new forms. At first I didn’t think that the hands would symbolize anything. To me most things are just shapes.





However, thinking back at the time when these drawings were created I think it might be more than that. I am yet to find out what exactly. I often think about how colours can carry different meanings and feelings. Not the usual red-is-for-passion-and-blue-for-sorrow type of rhetoric. For me personally colours are simply a reminder that thank-fucking-god this world is not as black-and-white as we think it is. When it comes my selection of colours as-such I usually tend to choose at **random**. Depending on the juxtapositions I want to make I choose the appropriate colours. My very basic knowledge on colour-theory of course helps my process. I like using the three primary colours but I also I like using colours that are “opposites” in order to create a more harmonious whole. Like for example yellow with purple or green and red. Sometimes the absence of colour is as important. The absence of colour creates spaces that need not be filled with unnecessary shenanigans.

**Studying the lines of your drawings, is there a way you can relate your drawings to thoughts that you have to quickly jot down?**

I draw **random** one-line figures almost everywhere. In my sketchbooks, in the books I’m reading, on the back of receipts and cigarette packets. A quick doodle never saved anybody but it never hurt anybody either. They are like thoughts that need to be written on some sort of surface before they slip away. I also have this need to occupy my hands with drawing rather than be on my phone all the time. So there’s that. In general, I don’t necessarily consider myself as this person with huge artistic endeavours and the profile of the struggling-and-unsettled artist does not suit me. I doodle because I am bored. I draw shapes like squares and rectangles possibly because my father is an architect. I like colours, especially yellow. Sometimes I enjoy a good book, a good film and a good drug. I like drinking and I like sex. I am your average next-door neighbour with a few doodles in her head that often like to be expressed.

**A child is sometimes a product  
of his environment and  
sometimes a product of him.**







# Barefoot Reminders of Death



*by Anthony Madukwe*

I

I am beside him on the hospital bed watching him cry a deeply retching cry that contorts his face into a mask of pain and vibrates his body. Teary-eyed, mouth open to the world. On his right hand is a large slice of pawpaw, his first meal in days. He says he has been forced into eating it because, just like his zest for life, his appetite disappeared with his good health. The pragmatic succor a slice of pawpaw offers is lost in the sorrow of this man's dying body. He says he has lost all his blood since he fell sick and shows me his green veins and pale palms as proof. In between heaving sobs, he raises his face to look at me and tells me he does not want to die.

He believes his wife wants to kill him. This belief, the terrible fear it inspires, almost oozes from the pores of his skin and each time he speaks of her, there is a quiver that begins at the sides of his lips and spreads to his fingers. He turns slightly to the right, touches his waist and explains that the pain is strongest at the base of his back, although everywhere in his body hurts.

"It's been two months," he says, "since I last sat up on this bed."

Nothing else makes sense to him except the promise of good health. The drugs, the tests, his presence on this stained, creaking bed in a hospital two miles from the nearest traffic light is his last desperate gasp at life. Outside, a gun blast

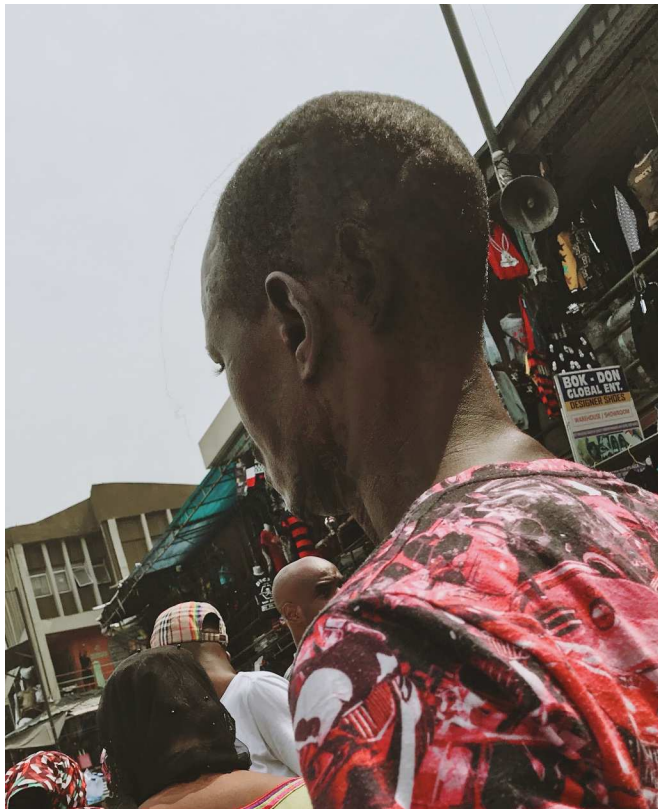


goes off in the distance but nobody in the room moves.

## II

I imagine a sky perfect for falling in love. The clouds block out the sun and the winds caress guava trees into a slow dance of *atilogwu*. I imagine a young woman giggling at the words of a man who isn't even funny. The blind stubbornness with which they agree to spend the rest of their lives together and the remarkably gentle way he slides the ring into her middle finger eight months after. "I do" she says, turning to smile at the young, lanky priest. His benign eyes are on them - he doubts he has seen a union this ecstatic. "I fucking do." Staring at the glittering metal on her finger, the way it catches the light from the church's chandelier, she is so sure that this feeling of bliss will last the rest of her life. It is not a product of blind faith but an almost mathematical conviction. She has done the lover's due diligence and everything checks out. Behind them, the congregation cheers.

It is in this same church - somewhere beneath the large dome - that they meet for the first time. Choir girl belting an unremarkable soprano from a corner of the church, he a warden parading the aisles, faded green sash draped across his shoulders and an arm long enough to tap sleeping worshipers. Each time he made his rounds during mass, he would stop by the choir stand to share a few conspiratorial whispers with his favorite chorister. Some days he would catch her sleeping during the homily and a sharp pinch would find her arm. Everyone in church liked him because he was



gentle and never got angry. Smiled at everyone with an intensity that made you believe he was being paid for it. She liked him because he was tall and kissed like a child.

### III

He deemed it the ultimate affront on his manly pride. What his day should look like is simple. He slaves 14 hours at his electronics shop, weaves through an unforgiving traffic and walks into his home to meet covered dishes on the dining table. At the same time everyday. If on a certain day he walks in and finds nothing on his table, there is something gone wrong with the stately arrangement of the universe.

A round of yelling and cussing is followed by a narration of how useless each party is - how insensitive to the worldly plight of the other. If a discussion was held between rational men for whom life has become oddly simplistic, food should not hold that much power over a marriage. Over a union of love. But it did. And when she felt he had yelled for too long and his voice was more than nestling on her nerves, she slapped him. And it was a slap that transcended the itchiness that spread through his cheeks. It filled him with doubts and with a weakness he couldn't explain. He is now silent, arm raised in paused gesticulation and watching as she turns and returns to the bedroom, the door shutting behind her.

The next morning she apologizes, with a tray of food and with more remorse than the situation demanded. But fifteen years later, his two sons are punching him in the gut. His wife is behind them directing the action. At intervals, she is reaching in with a knock on a head gone bald from age and stress, the sharp cracking sound lost in his loud whimpers. More kicks, more slaps and more crying until someone has the grand idea to use a metal tray against the head of a man they should be in love with. His head splits open and blood stains his shirt. The assaulters are gripped briefly by fear and a sense of foreboding because, despite their intent on harm, their anger is not bold enough to contemplate homicide. So they let him be and he survives and from the home of the woman who now holds him against her breast, he calls off a marriage that ended a long time ago.

### IV

You do not tell a man what to believe. Especially not this man. If he tells you there are spiders crawling around in his brain prevaricating his senses from normalcy, your job is to believe him. If he cries to you in the middle of the night and tells you his wife has set spirits upon him - tearing away his progress and his peace - and you look above his head and nothing hovers over him except a lone mosquito, it is not enough proof that he is lying. No attempt at sturdy sensibility. No smirking at the ridiculousness of the idea. Because for him the proof is there, everywhere around and in him and even you can see it for yourself if you chose to.

The lanky priest is here in the hospital. He is older now but his sultan is still very white. He has in his hands a half-empty bottle of olive oil. Its contents have brought a shine to the sick man's skin and some hope to what lays beyond. Everything feels like a cycle, a return to the glitter of the altar 25 years ago and the cheer of the gathered faithful. The report of fireworks and the happiness of promise. I will be here for as long as he remains and I promise to not ask about what went wrong. I will hold my peace and learn the lessons that seem obvious. I will share his pawpaw if he





















