

Asaba Memorial Committee and A Whitespace Creative Agency present *Asaba Memorial*, showing from November 28 through December 7, 2022 at Red Door Gallery, Lagos.

Featuring works by over 20 artists, including Victor Ehikamenor, Rom Isichei, Duke Asidere, Kelani Abass, Juliet Ezenwa Maja-Pearce, Ade Odunfa, Lekan Onabanjo, Philip Nzekwe, and Anthony Nwalpue, the exhibition will present works of a variety of media including paper works, oil paintings and sculpture.

Asaba Memorial reflects on the 1967 massacre of over a thousand Asabans, mostly men, during the Nigerian civil war. It examines both the opportunities and the limits of memorialization, faced not only by those intimately connected to tragic historical events, who have a personal interest in preserving and publicizing memories of those events but also by a wider public, among whom might exist young audiences who may lack the relevant context to connect the circumstances of the present to those of the past.

While art may not be a substitute for detailed accounts in books, essays, and other kinds of documents, this exhibition borrows from a long history of practices that emphasize the use of art as a tool for addressing social issues and creating opportunities for collective reckoning and restitutive action.

As a South African who calls Nigeria home, I understand the importance of this exhibition on a very personal level. The Sharpsville Massacre of 1960 and the more recent Marikana Massacre of 2012 are events that are impossible to erase from my memory and the memory of many South Africans. These events, and the many others not given due attention, have greatly informed my racial experience. Knowing that their effects, and those of Apartheid, are still deeply felt in South Africa today, I am inspired by the people of Asaba's continued survival and resounding call for the Massacre to be given its proper place in the telling of Nigeria's history. I'm also hopeful that as this project gains supporters from across the continent and the world, we can keep telling the story of Asaba through art and community.

Audiences will be glad to find works by 12-year-old artist Kanye Okeke, whose painting is the largest work on canvas in the show and was created especially for this exhibition. It also features the names of some of the victims. Also on view are works by Enotie Ogbebor, whose father witnessed the massacre as an officer in the Nigerian army, and

Ade Bakare, whose work honors the memory of Ogbueshi Okogwu, who was asked to welcome the Nigerian army when they arrived in Asaba. In addition, Ben Enwonwu's 1967 painting about the Civil War, *War Dreams* and Ben Onobrakpeya's 1972 painting, *Ayo Players*, are among the collection's oldest works. As the exhibition travels across locations, we intend to invite more artists' contributions and keep expanding the Park's collection.

Proceeds from the available collection will support the development of the Asaba Memorial Park, on which a thousand trees will be planted in memory of the victims of the Massacre.

As a site of commemoration, the park will serve as a reminder of the collective grief that has shaped Asaba life since the events of the civil war. As a heritage project, it will educate visitors about wider aspects of Asaba's history, culture, and people. Its grounds will also be used to emphasize the beauty and serenity of the Asaba landscape and promote opportunities for recreation, healing, and community

The Asaba Memorial Project was initiated by Mr. Chuck Nduka-Eze, whose experience as a barrister representing the British Crown and renowned artist Damien Hirst in the famous 'Ink Attack' case in 1994 in the UK, left him with a passion for cultural preservation.

Curated and written by Otsholeng Poo