

## **ASABA MEMORIAL EXHIBITION, INSPIRING REMEMBRANCE AND COMMUNAL HEALING THROUGH ART**

**27 November - 7 December 2022**

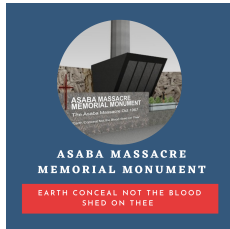
*The first major exhibition to institute a memorial park in honour of the victims of the Asaba massacre of 1967.*

**Lagos, Nigeria – 27 November 2022:** The Asaba Memorial Committee is pleased to announce the opening of **Asaba Memorial**, a group exhibition curated by Otsholeng Poo, and convened by Chief Chuck Nduka-Eze - the Isama Ajie of Asaba - to commemorate the tragic events of the Asaba Massacre in 1967. A captivating selection of work by Nigerian artists that provokes awareness and recognition of the tragic event in Nigeria's history and aims to support the development of the Asaba Memorial Park - a cultural monument in honour of the victims of the Asaba massacre of 1967. **Asaba Memorial**, produced by A Whitespace Creative Agency opens on the 27th of November, 2022, at Red Door Gallery, 51 Bishop Oluwole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos.

The Exhibition, on view through December 7th, offers a rare insight of the Asaba massacre of 1967. It covers the emotional complexities of a forgotten peaceful community with compelling stories on the trajectory of the horror and the growing realisation of the extent of the massacre during the Nigerian civil war. It simultaneously critiques the government and global communities' inaction to the atrocities that took place and will question commonly held assumptions about the massacre, and challenge visitors to consider the responsibilities and obstacles faced by those who managed to survive — from the young widows, women and children to soldiers — who made difficult choices, to effect change and in a few cases, took significant risks to help victims on that fateful day.

**The exhibition** features works from over 20 artists, including *IN MEMORIAM*, a monumental canvas piece with the names of some of the victims by a 12-year-old artist - Kanye Okeke, who created this work for this show and Victor Ehikhamanor's *Black Peace (2022)*, part of the series which was featured as the book cover of Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Ottanelli's book titled "*The Asaba Massacre: Trauma, Memory, and the Nigerian Civil War*".

Also on view is a body of work donated by Enotie Ogbemor, the son of a senior military officer in the Nigerian army who provided an eye-witness account of the atrocities that occurred in Asaba and renowned fashion designer Ade Bakare's *Ogbueshi* - a Guipure cotton lace with red paint and soil that depicts the fate of Chief Mariam Babangida's father - Late Ogbueshi Leonard Nwanonyei Okogwu, who was to give the welcome address to the soldiers on behalf of the Asaba community on that fateful day. 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.



**Curator Otsholeng Poo said,** *“As a South African who calls Nigeria home, I understand the importance of this exhibition on a very personal level. 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”. “As the exhibition travels across locations, we intend to invite more artists’ contributions and keep expanding the Park’s collection”.*

Speaking about the event, **Chief Nduka-Eze** explained the importance of using art as a powerful catalyst for bringing awareness to important issues that receive only marginal attention. *“To date, there has been no proper explanation or official apology from the Federal Government of Nigeria for the humanitarian crime”. We encourage everyone to come and explore the exhibition. It will challenge people not only to ask, ‘what could have been done?’ but also, ‘what can we do?’ This is the first step to creating a memorial site that is accessible and dignified in its representation to honour the victims, a place that will be a community symbol of all the lives lost and extend to encompass a cultural and recreational attraction for both local and international tourists.”*

The exhibition is part of a series of remembrance activities to support the development of a permanent physical space - a world-class nature park, monument, artistic and cultural centre in honour of all those who lost their lives and were displaced by the Asaba massacre. The Memorial Park will have, as its foundation, 1,000 trees as a symbol of all the lives lost. It will be a legacy project that finally gives homage to the victims, their families and becomes a place for reflection on healing for Asabans and all Nigerians.

Stakeholders have commented on the importance of this Asaba memorial initiative.

**Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Ottanelli, authors of the book on the Asaba Massacre published by the Cambridge University Press UK** said: *“This new initiative will take the memorial process to a new level, bringing visibility throughout the nation and the continent. This new visibility gives hope that Asaba will finally see an official acknowledgement of responsibility for its suffering. But above it, this spectacular memorial will honour those who died, ensuring they will not be forgotten and leading the way to a better future.”*

**Ibrahim Pam, Head of GCF’s United Nations Independent Integrity Unit,** *in a blog post,* said: *“The Asaba Massacre Memorial Monument Project as a memorialization initiative could then become that essential catalyst for the promotion of national reconciliation that is anchored on an honest discussion of historical grievance, that leads to acknowledgement and recompense, and promotes genuine appeasement and national unity. Therein lies the eternal value of this project.”*



**Jon Silverman, Professor of Media and Criminal Justice, University of Bedfordshire & Former Home Affairs Correspondent BBC:** *"It is right that it should be commemorated and the victims honoured, not to fan the flames of ethnic tension but as a simple necessity: to leave a permanent physical record of inhumanity for this and future generations to reflect on and ensure that it is never repeated."*

**Asaba Memorial** will run through December 7th, 2022, at Red Door Gallery, Victoria Island, Lagos. Opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 11-6 pm.

For more information, visit [www.asabamemorialmonument.org](http://www.asabamemorialmonument.org)

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## NOTE TO EDITORS

### THE ARTISTS

- Ben Enwonwu
- Bruce Onobrakpeya
- Olumide Onadipe
- Victor Ehikamenor
- Kelani Abass
- Sadiq Ajibola Williams
- Joseph Ogbeinde
- Duke Asidere
- Kainebi Osahenye
- Rom Isichei
- Stacey Ravvero
- Juliet Ezenwa Maja-Pearce
- Ade Bakare
- Enotie Ogbemor
- Adekusibe Odunfa
- Ozangeobuoma
- Prince Orlu
- Adiza Nzekwe
- Anthony Nwalupue
- Kanye Okeke
- Elizabeth Ekpatorson
- Tiffany Annabelle-Davies
- Ayoola Gbolahan
- Phillip Nzekwe
- Naomi Oyeniyi
- Marcia Martins DaRosa
- Lekan Onobanjo

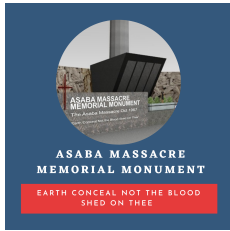
### THE CURATOR

Otsholeng Poo is a curator of modern and contemporary African art.

### THE CONVENER

Chuck Nduka-Eze is an entrepreneur and lawyer who represented the Anioma Community at the special panel of The Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission of Nigeria in 1999 with respect to the genocide of their people during the Nigerian Civil War. He is not new to the excitement and intricacies of the art world and had his first encounter to the world of art with the *cause celeb dead sheep case* involving the damaged exhibit of the celebrated artist Damien Hirst, exhibiting at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington, London. He successfully prosecuted the curator, Mr Bridger, who damaged the piece as a protest gesture.

### ABOUT THE ASABA MEMORIAL COMMITTEE



Chairman of the Committee - Chief Chuck Nduka-Eze The Isama Ajie of Asaba.

Members: Chief (Dr) Ben Okonta, The Ojiba of Asaba, Chief (Prof) Victor Izegbu, Orjiaku of Asaba, Ogbueshi Chike Ogeah, Ogbueshi Ken Odogwu, Ms Ngozi Edozien, Ogbueshi Uche Nwajei, The Onoi of Asaba.

Consultants - Mr Gambo Pam, Mr Ed Keazor, Professors Elizabeth Bird & Fraser Ottanelli, Chief (Mrs) Juliana Edewor-Izegbu, Odoziaku of Asaba.