

## 30 YEARS OF THE IFE ART SCHOOL

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Culture as a rallying point manifests in multivalent variations such as in motifs, concepts, styles and materials. All these have been well articulated, consolidated and improvised by the members of the school to achieve pleasurable varieties of visual treasures. The exciting thing about the "Ife Art School" is the dynamism of the individual artists. — Kunle Filani

The making of the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, and the Ife Art School actually had its seed planted in the 1960s. With the founding of the university in 1962 and its location at Ile-Ife, the cradle of an ancient civilization, an Institute of African Studies was put in place to ensure the actualization of aspects of culture as reflected in its motto "for learning and culture". The Institute became a melting pot of interests for scholars, artists and researchers who conducted in-depth research into all aspects of African art and culture. The best of the Institute's achievements, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, was the successful organisation of the University's 'town' and 'gown' programme tagged Ori Olokun Workshop Experiment. The Institute later became a springboard for establishing teaching departments, one of which was Fine Arts.

The academic tradition of art began in Ife in 1966, when the 'department' as a section of the Institute started offering graduate courses as service courses. The first set of students for a degree course in Fine Arts was admitted in 1973/74 session. The Department however gained its 'independence' and became a full-fledged Department in 1975. Established to provide the students with practical and academic training in all aspects of visual Arts, not only to meet the manpower needs of a growing nation, the department was also to conduct research into all aspects of indigenous, traditional and contemporary arts. This is the basis for encouraging our students to make creative use of traditional African forms and symbols, while at the same time developing their own individual modes of expression. The objective is to enable students make an impact on schools, industries, the mass / electronic media and society at large, by promoting the appreciation of both traditional and contemporary art forms.

The Department has recorded great achievements in the past three decades. From inception, it has continued to attract famous artists, erudite researchers and reputable scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds from whose wealth of experience students have benefited immensely. In its early stages, there were the likes of the late Prof. Ben Enwonwu and Prof. Solomon Wangboje. Its birth, weaning and infancy were witnessed and nurtured by Prof. Babatunde Lawal, Prof. J.R.O. Ojo, Prof. Rowland Abiodun, Prof. Agbo Folarin, Prof. Ola Olapade and Mr. R.I. Ibigbami. The list later included Munio Makuchi, P.S.O. Aremu (now



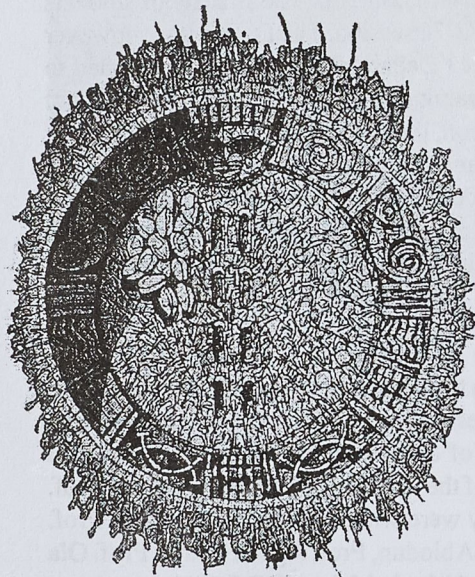
a Prof.) and Lamidi Fakeye, the master neo-traditional carver. The 1980s witnessed, in the grooming process, the engagement of Moyo Okediji and later Bolaji Campbell and some other graduates of the department, who, in Prof. Ojo's word, typify the artistic consciousness of the Ife experiment. Today, about 90 percent of the academic staff are graduates of the Ife Art School.

The seed planted in the students led to the formation of Ona movement by five graduates of the department in 1980, and the ideological base of the movement has become generally acknowledged and accepted as a form of expression even beyond the shores of this country.

Another remarkable achievement of the department is the Best of Ife exhibition series which has become an annual 'ritual', show-casing the robust harvest of talents produced by the department over the years. The exhibition series have not only been able to justify the appellation Ife Art school, they have also highlighted the creativity and diversity inherent in Ife graduates

The greatest of our achievements, over the years, lies in the remarkable success stories of the Ife art school graduates in their various endeavours. The products of the department over the years have made ineradicable prints in academics and in studio practice (both at home and abroad) and also in various professional practices; in the industries, ministries and agencies, creative departments of multinational companies and the mass media. This is the basis for our celebration, a celebration of excellence in creativity.

**Pictures from the Exhibition "Ife Art School in Retrospect "**



Asoro dayo, by Mufu Onifade

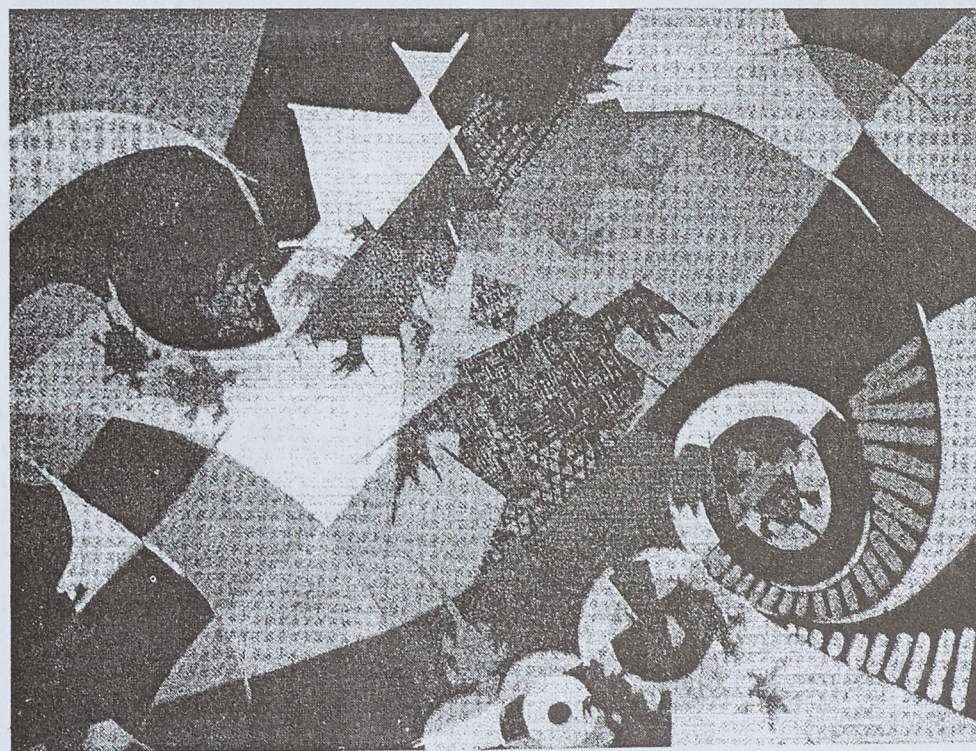


Nature's call, by Rotimi Ajiboye



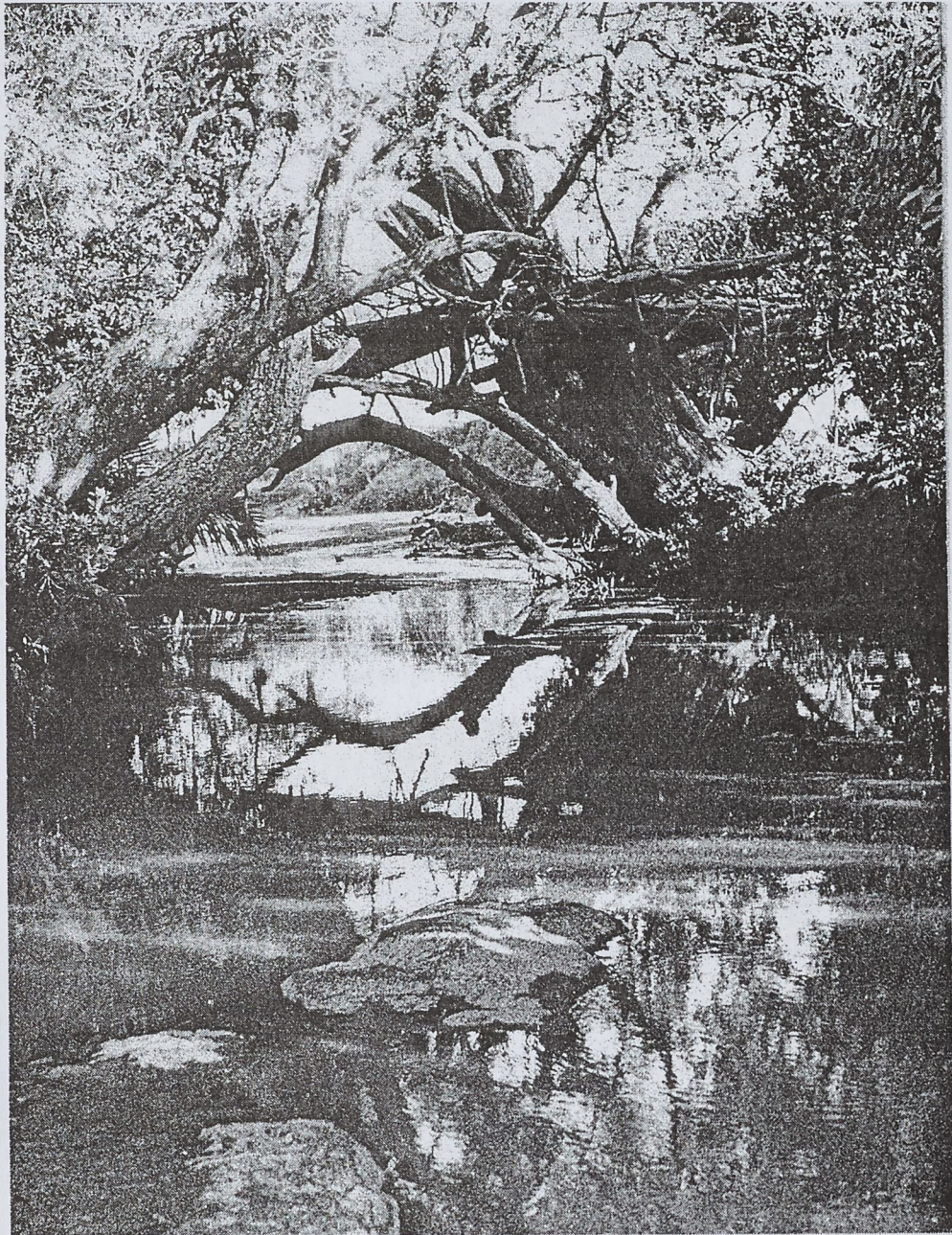


Molue, by Yemi Ajiboye



Aye Soro, by Yemi Bello





The river at Tokkos, Plateau State, 1975  
Photo: R. Elkington