

OBITUARIES

Prof. Ekpo Eyo (28 July 1931—29 May 2011)

Ekpo, who was also a patron of the African Refugees Foundation, died in the early hours of Sunday, at his home in Maryland, United States of America. He was a professor of Anthropology at the institution.

“Ekpo Eyo was an outstanding archaeologist, anthropologist and museologist. Archaeological pieces excavated in and around Owo in Ondo State are among spectacular contributions by Ekpo Eyo to museum work in Nigeria. As museologist, Ekpo Eyo left a legacy of efficient management systems of Nigeria’s National Museums by the time of his retirement,” writes the Chief Executive Officer, Olujimi Olusola, in a tribute to the deceased.

Born on July 28, 1931, Eyo attended Presbyterian Primary School, Creek town and Duke Town Secondary School, Calabar. He then received his tertiary education at the prestigious Cambridge University in United Kingdom with a Bachelors and Master’s Degree, and earned his doctoral degree at the University of Ibadan. He then joined the faculty of his alma mater at Ibadan.

In a tribute signed by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, Ibrahim Mahe, the ministry noted that Eyo’s initial career as an accomplished academic soon translated into an administrative acumen second to none. He was able to recognise human resources as the cornerstone of the NCMM and channel each human component into a career management line most suitable to their natural inclination and academic qualification.

Mahe said, “It was such that the first generation of curators, archaeologist, conservators, anthropologists, art historians and museum technicians were produced. Professor Ekpo can be described as the doyen of museum administration in Nigeria. Indeed, his era remains what even the harshest critic would call the golden era of the National Commissions Museums and Monuments. From a few buildings in Lagos, he oversaw the transformation of the Museums into a truly national institution with widespread presence in every part of Nigeria.

—*Punch* 5 June 2011

His academic description

Professor Ekpo Eyo specializes in African art. In recent years he has been directing archaeological field work at three important Nigerian sites, Ile-Ife, Owo, and Ikom. He has reported the findings of those expeditions and his further research in the *Unesco Courier*, *The West African Journal of Archaeology*, *Africa Heute*, *Insight: The Quarterly of World Affairs*, *African Arts* and other journals. His books include *Two Thousand Years of Nigerian Art* (Imprimerie Marsens, Lausanne) and, with co-author Frank Willet, *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria: Legacy of Two Thousand Years* (Alfred Knopf, New York). He is preparing a book to be titled *The Royal Art of Owo*.

Professor Eyo was named Smithsonian Regency Fellow in 1984. He is involved in continuing on-site study of the monoliths of the Cross River region of eastern Nigeria, a project funded by the French Dapper Foundation, the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, and the University's Graduate School. He was also consultant to a major exhibition of African art that opened in 1995 at the Royal Academy of Art, London. Professor Eyo was a participant in an international symposium, *The Part of Archaeology in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue between North and South*, held in Switzerland under the sponsorship of the Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeological Research and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

—University of Maryland

His recent masterpiece:

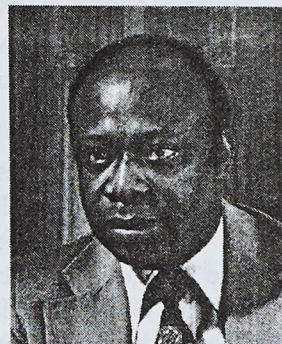
From Shrines to Showcases: Masterpieces of Nigerian Art, (2010, Federal Ministry of Information and Communication, Abuja).

A Personal Tribute

I came to know him in 1976 when I joined the service of the Federal Department of Antiquities. I did not know why he called me and drew me close to himself. He never ever explained to me why. All he told me was listen. He did narrate many stories to me. He made me the youngest curator. Twice I sat on the seat under him. The break was when I went for further training in the UK. I was curator till a few months before his retirement. While in the US, we communicated. Strangely, I was posted to Calabar in 1993, a place he spends his summer break from school. We worked closely ever since then. I stopped over in his house in February when I was in the US.

He sat on my life as a mother hen sits on her eggs.
 The heat of his body I felt and nourished me.
 I drank from the well of his wisdom and art.
 He made my foot strong for greater heights.
 He breathed the breath of museum life into me.
 He set my eyes on standards that made men great.
 He was true to me to the end.

And so it was said!
 And so we heard it!
 Why is death that cruel,
 But in it so glorious.



Prof.,

Simple in life but passionate about our past (antiquities and museums)
 About our history and culture as the hot spot of branding Nigeria.
 A vacuum is created, a big gap is yearning to be filled.
 A gash in the heart if the nation, when will it be healed?

It is well!

Adieu

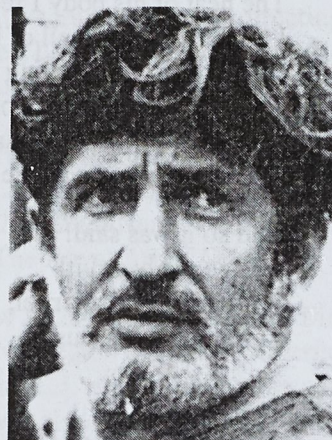
This is the tribute from me,

Nath Mayo Adediran
 —Director of Museums,
 National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

Horst Ulrich (Ulli) Beier, 1922- 2011

Ulli Beier played a major role on the Nigerian cultural scene of the 1950's and 60's. With his death, we have lost a man whose writing, photography and brokering skills brought Nigerian, in particular Yoruba, culture to the attention of the world.

Fleeing the racist excesses of Nazi Germany, he taught physically challenged children in London and while on holiday in Paris, met and was smitten by the artist, Suzanne Wenger. He accepted a post to teach phonetics at University College, Ibadan, newly established in 1948, once they both arrived in Nigeria in 1950.



The British-dominated, colonial society at the University was antithetical to Ulli's Bohemian personality, so he transferred to the Extra-Mural Department (now Adult Education) which took him off campus into the heart of Yoruba society. By 1955, Ulli was publishing articles on Nigerian art and culture, illustrated with masterly black and white photos, in *Nigeria Magazine* (established in 1932, but now defunct), which remains a treasure-trove of information on mid-twentieth century Nigeria. In 1957 he became co-editor of *Black Orpheus*, a journal of Black literature, and *Odu*, a journal of Yoruba and Edo studies (published by the Ministry of Education, Ibadan). There followed a series of articles, books and monographs on the art and artists of Nigeria, particularly the Yoruba. Ulli also translated Yoruba poetry and drama into English with the help of Bakare Gbadamosi.

The Beier's moved off campus, taking up residence first in Ede and then in Osogbo, in a rambling, Brazilian-style building at 40 Ibokun Road, where they became deeply immersed in Yoruba culture. Suzanne learnt the Yoruba starch-batik method from a Yoruba woman at Ede, using it to illustrate the myths of the Yoruba orisa. Most significantly, she met in Ede the Aajagemoo, high priest of Obatala, creator of the earth and humankind, and became absorbed into Yoruba ritual life. This led her later to reconstruct, with the help of the members of the New Sacred Art Movement, many shrines in the Osun Groves of Osogbo, which had fallen into disrepair.

Meanwhile, Ulli became passionately involved in the affairs of Mbari, a club founded in Ibadan in 1961 and defined in the brochure soliciting members as "a house of culture run by artists and writers for the benefit of the general public. It is the place to see and know works by Nigerian and foreign writers and artists, and it is the place to meet them." Operating from modest premises near Ogunpa, it offered a stimulating menu

of performances (dance and drama) and art exhibitions. It also had a small library and bar open to members. Shortly afterwards, a branch of Mbari was opened in Osogbo in a building belonging to Duro Ladipo, the Yoruba dramatist whose works were promoted with great success by Ulli Beier. *Oba Koso*, an opera based on the life of Sango, received rare reviews in Europe.



The Beier / Wenger residence, Osogbo

Ulli facilitated a series of art workshops in Ibadan and Osogbo 1961-64 with Pancho Guedes, Julian Beinart, Derris Williams and Georgina Beier as teachers who sought to release creative energies rather than instruct. These workshops produced artists whose names and works became known internationally, thanks to Ulli Beier's efforts to publicise them through exhibitions and reviews — Jacob Afolabi, Rufus Ogundele, Twins Seven-Seven, Muraira Oyelami, Adebisi Fabunmi, Jimoh Buraimoh. The "Oshogbo Artists", as they were known, generated a lot of controversy in intellectual and art circles both in

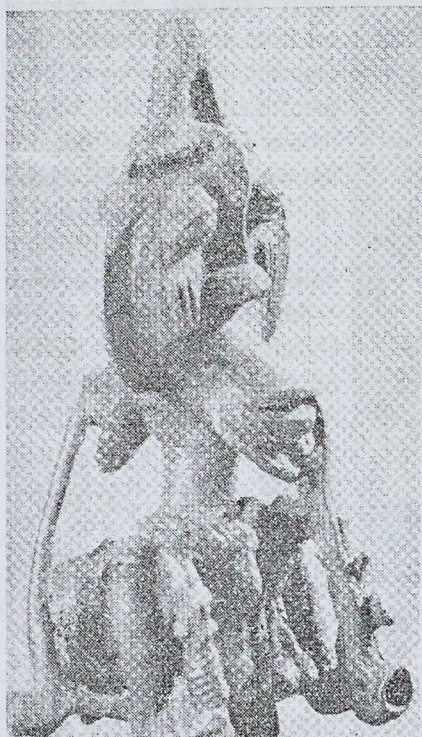
Nigeria and abroad: how could they be genuine artists when they had received no exposure to art training before the Oshogbo workshops? How could they be recognised as representatives of modern art in Nigeria in preference to the products of Nigerian formal art schools? Time has vindicated the efforts of Ulli Beier and the talent of the Osogbo Artists.

Ulli and Georgina Beier left Nigeria in 1966 to work at the University of Papua New Guinea, where they stimulated a modern art movement as they had in Osogbo. Ulli returned to Nigeria in 1971 as Director of the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ife, taking over from his friend, the historian Michael Crowder, who was

an enthusiastic supporter of Mbari. Crowder had set up the Ori Olokun Cultural Centre in Ife town with the aim of bringing town and gown together "to develop the culture of Nigeria". The Centre was a venue for the fine and performing arts with an art gallery, workshop and courtyard, just like Mbari!

mbari

ARTISTS' AND WRITERS' CLUB
N6/32 OYO RD. (OLD CENTRAL HOTEL)
IBADAN TEL. 21167.



CHAIRMAN:

DR. O na ORUWARIYE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

J. P. CLARK

AKIN EUBA

AIGBOJE HIGO

DEMAS NWOKO

WOLE SOYINKA

CHINUA ACHEBE

CHIEF ULLI BEIER

OMOBOLA ONAJIDE

CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO

Ibadan

Ulli finally left Nigeria in the mid-70's but continued to promote African culture in Germany through the establishment of Iwalewa Haus, the Africa Centre of the University of Bayreuth. In his own words, he wanted "a house where almost anything can be organised: a scholarly lecture or a concert of classical African drumming, an African fashion show or an Indian meal... I didn't want to address small groups of university dons or students alone... I wanted to reach the people of Bayreuth too... The problems of Third World countries can be better understood if one becomes acquainted with their art and music."

Ulli spent the last decades of his life in Australia promoting and publicising modern Aboriginal artists, once again acting as a catalyst for latent creative

talents. However, throughout the whole of his busy creative life, Ulli Beier's deepest affinity was with the Yoruba, their culture and their art. On a visit to Nigeria in 2005, he said he was sure his "ori inu" (inner essence) was Yoruba! That he was loved and appreciated in return by the Yoruba is evident in the tributes paid to him by a galaxy of writers and artists who gathered in Osogbo on 2 July 2011 at the invitation of the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding.

Akanji, sun re o!

—Pat Oyelola

Prince Twins Seven-Seven (Taiwo Olaniyi Osuntoki)

Prince Twins Seven-Seven, one of Nigeria's foremost artists from the famous Oshogbo School, died on 16 June 2011, at University College Hospital, Ibadan, where he had been the past two months because of a stroke.



His former wife and tie-and-dye artist, Mrs Nike Okundaiye, described Twin Seven-Seven, who spent a great part of his art practice in Philadelphia, U.S., as a very renowned artist and an icon in his field. His work adorns the UNESCO building in France.

She also stated that Twins Seven-Seven did a lot to promote Nigerian and African art around the world, both with his works and scholarly engagements, saying his legacy would remain unquantifiable in the annals of Nigerian art.

Prince Twins Seven-Seven, a flamboyant painter and musician, was born in 1944 in Ogidi Ikimu, Nigeria. He was one of the original artists of the famed Oshogbo School, which arose in newly independent Nigeria in the early 1960s. Seven-Seven rapidly achieved international fame, with major exhibitions in Europe, Japan and Australia, as well as the United States. His work is now in museums and private collections around the world, including the Smithsonian Institution and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

A citation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2005 stated: "He is a prominent artist as well as a bandleader, teacher, dancer, actor and spokesman for Yoruba culture. His artistic works reflect a personal cosmology drawn from Yoruba myths and stories.

Twins' highly individual technique is the physical manifestation of a universe of potent forces in a state of constant transformation. The images themselves are wonderfully complex; forms collide with colors to reveal a mythopoetic world that demonstrates his unique imaginative power."

Twins Seven-Seven's autobiography, *A dreaming life*, edited by Ulli Beier, was published in 1999 by Bayreuth African Studies, Bayreuth, Germany.

UNESCO named him UNESCO Artis for Peace for 2005. The award was presented by the Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, at a ceremony in Paris. The ceremony was attended by His Excellency, Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairperson of the African Union.

—Adapted from *The Guardian*, 17 June 2011