

IGI ARABA

An Exhibition and Retrospective
of Works by Yusuf Grillo

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The Power to Surprise

“Yusuf Grillo: Universalising Yoruba Consciousness”

– Kunle Filani

On behalf of Arthouse Contemporary, it is my great honour and privilege to present Yusuf Grillo’s newest solo exhibition, entitled *Igi Araba*. As one of Nigeria’s legendary master artists, Yusuf Grillo has led a prolific career that has shaped the discourse of modern art in the country. This exhibition marks the first solo exhibition of Grillo in over forty years, a long overdue project that showcases the development and evolution of his artistic practice.

This exhibition is the culmination of lengthy discussions with Grillo over the last two years in developing this project. One of the foundational aims of Arthouse Contemporary has been the renewed attention of iconic artists from the modern period in Nigeria, this exhibition includes a book publication that undertook extensive research and critical analysis of Grillo’s rich artistic career. This follows Arthouse Contemporary’s goal in preserving Nigeria’s art history for the next generation.

This exhibition also includes a video documentary that was produced by the Foundation for Contemporary & Modern Visual Arts. We extend our immense gratitude to Mr. Olayinka Fisher for offering such an important resource for future scholars of Grillo’s art.

We would also like to thank our sponsors for their continued support of the art in Nigeria. Access Bank has made vital contributions to Arthouse Contemporary since its initial stages, and they continue to make such projects possible. Special thanks to Mr. Herbert Wigwe, Managing Director of Access Bank, for his tireless dedication to Nigerian culture. We would also like to thank Kia Motors, KFC, and Veuve Clicquot for their vital contributions to this exhibition.

With *Igi Araba*, we are proud to showcase this long deserved retrospective of a celebrated national treasure.

Sincerely,

Kavita Chellaram

The superstructure of Yusuf Grillo’s artistic creativity is built on a solid conceptual foundation that is cast with the finest alchemy of talent and intellect. A phenomenal genius, Grillo is gifted with a sixth sense that enables him to effortlessly envision life’s complex dimensions. He continually searches for the ideal, the novel and the experimental in art. He engages diverse materials and methods to interpret seemingly simple and profane subject matter that are actually coded in complex humanistic philosophies.

Grillo is one of the artists that appropriately defined modern African art as a synthesis of the old and the new. The old was the indigenous cultural artistic practices of Africa, while the new was the Eurocentric stylistic variables that were promoted by the West all over African countries, especially during the colonial years of the twentieth century. The Zaria Art Society, founded by a group of young art students in the late 1950s in the present day Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, became epochal with their theory of *Natural Synthesis*, which guided their art practices after graduation. Members including Yusuf Grillo were not held hostage by the popular European conceptual art paradigms. Rather, they individually explored their indigenous cultures and appropriated its inherent art styles to suit modern artistic tendencies.

Yusuf Grillo interrogates the traditional style of Yoruba carving and translates the forms into two-dimensional paintings, using excellent draughtsmanship to achieve schematic images that are seemingly arrested in restrained motion. The forms, often classified as *Stylised Naturalism*, have elongated figural images cast in elegant poses. He creates overlapping planes both in the foreground and the background of the composition. The figures and images are made to resonate with a sublime effusion of mauves.

CREATIVE BEGINNINGS

A historical narrative of Grillo’s contributions to contemporary African art must contextualise

his formal and thematic erudition within the cultural milieu of a dynamic ethnicity. Born in the cosmopolitan city of Lagos, he grew up in the core Lagos metropolis; an urbane settlement historically christened *Brazilian Quarters*. Grillo’s grandfather returned from Brazil to their African homeland after the abolition of the slave trade. Most of the victims of the illicit trade came back to West Africa with specialised skills, broader world view and western education. Such diverse knowledge was rare in pre-colonial Nigeria. The Yoruba Brazilians adopted the design of modern Brazilian architecture for their houses and operated an urbane and sophisticated lifestyle. Their children also shared in the nuanced prestige of their progenitors. They considered themselves as worthy inheritors of a dynamic, social and cultural patrimony. Not unlike those in the Diaspora in Brazil, the Lagos settlers and their subsequent offspring were also very sensitive to Yoruba traditions. The *Brazilian Quarters* in Lagos therefore became an arena for the convergence of Yoruba cultural practices, manifesting in seasonal religious festivals, rites and rituals. It was within this mix of socio-cultural diversity that Yusuf Grillo was born in 1934.

Suave, urbane and cosmopolitan, Yusuf Grillo was brilliant and multi-talented. By the time Grillo enrolled for higher study in Fine Arts in Zaria in 1956, he was far more exposed to the undercurrents of creativity than most of his schoolmates. He had been taught by some of the pioneers of modern art such as Aina Onobulu, an itinerant art teacher to many secondary schools in Lagos. He also learned and benefitted from the artistic practices of Akinola Lasekan and J. K. Oye.

The lecturers in Zaria were all British with the exemption of Miss Etsu Ngbodaga, a young Nigerian lady who was a British-trained art educator. The curriculum was imported from the Royal Art School and replete with colonial imprints. Propelled by the prevalent wind of independence in the late 1950s, the radical members of the Zaria Art Society,

of whom Grillo was a prominent member, took academic liberty to explore indigenous themes. They also incorporated formal characteristics of African art and craft traditions into their synthetic style.

Four of the Zaria Art Society members, including Yusuf Grillo, were to become very famous in later years due to their diverse creativity and exemplary commitment to the development of contemporary Nigerian art. The others are Uche Okeke, scholar and Uli exponent; Demas Nwoko, the self-inspired architect who adapted Nok culture in his forms; and the prodigious printmaker and installation artist Bruce Onobrakpeya. Grillo stood out as a great painter with a distinct capacity for excellent draughtsmanship. He equally demonstrated versatility as a competent sculptor, muralist and stained glass designer.

MATRIX, PRAXIS AND CHARACTERISTICS

As a member of the Zaria Art Society, his interest in the interrogation of indigenous ideals was kindled by like-minded colleagues. He experimented with Cubist forms, using bolder geometric shapes. His use of angular structures found appropriate correlation in the Yoruba wood carving style. He successfully domesticated the Western naturalistic style by employing motifs of Yoruba traditions in his paintings. Typical of his formal characteristics is the use of Yoruba dresses, which accounts for the peculiar sartorial elegance of his figures. Relics of culture such as traditional drums, ritual staffs and appurtenances, and icons of royal and economic motifs constantly manifest in his paintings. The themes of his works are often derived from everyday human conditions but exemplified within a Yoruba indigenous context. His use of colour is mature, tamed and cool. He lavishes shades and tints of violet, green and blue in selected portions of the composition, thereby not only creating thematic emphasis, but also generating profound textural and visual aesthetic qualities.

Yusuf Grillo is a master of compositional arrangement. He orchestrates series of geometric planes in his pictures both as forms and as design elements. He fuses the fore-figures with the background through a seemingly innocent tonal differentiation or hard edge demarcation. He obliterates visual partitions by unifying his compositions with suggestive ambivalent structures.

PAINTING AND STAINED GLASS: A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

It was Kavita Chellaram, the director of Arthouse Contemporary, who first suggested that a painting of Grillo be reproduced in a stained glass technique. According to Grillo, this represents “a new thought from old images; a new vision of same idea”. He recalled that back in his schooling days in Zaria, a lecturer named Clifford Frith had hinted that his paintings looked like stained glass because of the linear angularity of planes that defined his pictorial compositions. This triggered his interest in stained glass, coupled with the continuous tutelage under Paul Mount, Grillo’s respected mentor in art. Paul Mount was a British multi-talented artist who introduced informal art lessons into Yaba College of Technology in the 1950s. He handed the lessons over to Grillo in 1962 when he and some of the expatriate staff relocated to Europe due to the post-independence indigenisation policy in Nigeria.

After attending a training workshop in Bradford in Britain to learn more about stained glass techniques, Grillo adapted the techniques to suit more readily available materials such as plexiglass. He is now the most famous stained glass designer in Nigeria, having done many splendid installations in various churches. In spite of being a devout Muslim, Grillo grasps biblical concepts with ease and interprets the commissioned themes with a recognizable imprint of his painting characteristics. Grillo thus started a series of stained glass paintings that were conceptually and stylistically generated from his paintings. Interestingly, there seems to be a symbiotic dialogue between the old paintings and the new glass works. Indeed, Grillo started to see fresh formal possibilities in his old paintings due to certain artistic structural challenges that he was able to resolve in the glass interpretations. The end result is that some of his old paintings were retouched with moderate adjustments in form, while the stained glass derivatives also assumed formal and pictorial originality.

Grillo certainly didn’t spin out stained glass copies of the paintings; his intellectual and innovative faculty is too superior for self imitation. He transformed the painting elements and principles into a more technical and overwhelming method of production. The translucent nature of glass added to the glow of his subtle use of colours.

IMAGING YORUBA CONSCIOUSNESS

Perhaps the most enduring legacy Grillo bestowed on contemporary Nigerian art is his faithfulness to Yoruba culture without ossifying traditions. He represents a creative bridge that filled the transitory gap between dynamic Yoruba wood carving traditions and contemporary Yoruba art.

Although Aina Onabolu and Akinola Lasekan were Yoruba men who pioneered modern Nigerian art, their naturalistic forms are not typical of the Yoruba canon as established in wood carving. The only artist who experimented with two-dimensional simulations of Yoruba images was Ayo Ajayi. However, his forms are a direct adoption of the traditional carving style which diminished his paintings as imitative. On the other hand, Grillo’s form was creatively expedient, original and modernist in outlook.

Apart from creatively adopting and modernising the traditional wood carving style, Grillo also celebrates the sartorial comeliness of Yoruba attires. He always selects appropriate indigenous dresses to enhance his thematic relevance. The range of garments used by Grillo includes casual, ceremonial, ritual, religious and royal dresses. He particularly extols the virtues of women by depicting them in fashionable clothing. He even creatively adapts the typical Yoruba attires by modernising the design to suit the various ambiances of human attitude and character. For example, Grillo exaggerates and elongates sizes, styles, folds and knots of the head gears and clothes worn by some imprudent and impudent ladies.

The backgrounds of Grillo’s paintings are deliberately geometrised using a simple and complex interface of structural rectangles, squares and triangles. Subdued forms of local architecture commonly found in urban towns and cities in Yorubaland are indirectly implied. He uses the principles of convergence and dispersal to create three-dimensional illusions by harmonising both areal and linear perspective points.

Even in the use of colour, Grillo’s inspiration comes from the Yoruba chromatic tradition. He derives his colour schemes primarily from blue, purple and green and merely accentuates contrast by selecting the correlates in the colour wheel. Grillo valorises purple even in its imbued royalty and makes mauves more sensitive to our affective domain. Any observer of Yoruba culture will immediately notice the tonal affinities of Grillo’s pigments with the indigo dyes

and its derivative shades of purple and green. This is characteristic of the tie-dye and batik textiles that are popularly produced in Abeokuta. It is also observable that Grillo’s colours also identify with the Yoruba Aso Oke type, which often comes in strips of Prussian blue and deep purple.

Yusuf Grillo’s subject matter is generated from everyday life events around him. He is also fond of making social or religious comments by alluding to biblical or Islamic stories. His religious conceptualisation of themes is interpreted both in content and form with the matrix of Yoruba visualisation. He makes puns in a humouristic manner by engaging day to day issues with poetic commonalities. The titles of his works are often slangs and expressions that are derived from street usage. As a devout Muslim, Grillo equally explores Islamic themes from both the faith and the practice perspective.

Grillo’s creative adaptation of themes situates the universal in the local, while the indigenous is also made global. He espouses a humanistic philosophy that recognises human beings as social animals with a generic attitude to life. Grillo uses Yoruba culture as a humanising pedestal to unify divergent races, religions and societies.

Grillo’s comportment is replete with wisdom and piety while discussing philosophical and religious mysteries. His heart is as immaculate as the white dresses he always wears. With his unique contributions to the development of contemporary Nigerian art and art education, it will surely be written of him that “a creative genius walked this contemporary path”.

** Kunle Filani (MFA PhD) is an artist, critic and art historian.*

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Yusuf Adebayo Cameron Grillo

Widely regarded as one of Nigeria's most celebrated contemporary artists, Yusuf Grillo has led a prolific career that has shaped the discourse of modern art in the country. Emerging to prominence and international recognition in the 1960s and 1970s, Grillo's work is deeply influenced by the characteristics of traditional Yoruba philosophy and sculpture. As a member of the Zaria Arts Society, popularly known as the Zaria Rebels, Grillo combined his training in the Western-representational style with a focus on Nigeria's unique and rich artistic history. He is particularly known for the specific use of the color blue in his paintings, a reference to adire and resist-dye textiles used in Nigeria.

After extensive education in Nigeria and the UK, Grillo served as Head of the Department of Art and Printing at Yaba College of Technology for over twenty five years. His iconic stained glass and mosaic works have been commissioned for a number of public buildings in Nigeria including churches, universities, government buildings, and the Murtala Mohammed International Airport. Grillo has also served as the founding president of the Society of Nigerian Artists, the professional body for all practicing artists in Nigeria.

ADEBAYO YUSUF CAMERON GRILLO – THE QUINTESSENTIAL MASTER ARTIST AND EDUCATOR

Adebayo Yusuf Cameron Grillo was born in 1934 in the Brazilian quarters of Lagos. In 1960, he graduated in visual arts from the then Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (now Ahmadu Bello University Zaria). Since graduation, he has dedicated his life to producing masterpiece paintings, stained glass and sculptures and in developing and educating young and upcoming artists.

Grillo and his peers belong to the privileged class of Nigerians who had first class tertiary education in Nigeria, and who have since thereafter significantly contributed to the growth, revolution and development of Nigerian modern art. Grillo's class of graduates of the art school in Zaria constitutes the founding members of the Zaria Art Society that are now widely celebrated by Nigerian art historians as the "Zaria Rebels". The society was a collection of like minds of Nigerian art students in the college who collectively decided to revolutionize and conceptualize their works of art along Nigerian culture, tradition, motifs and scenes, in strong and successful resistance against the general philosophy of teaching at the school. While the expatriate lecturers were naturally predisposed to impacting European art concepts and methodology on the young minds of the Zaria school, this set of students rather preferred to develop their own style based on the fusion of African concepts and civilization, combined with the Eurocentric methodology and skills of Europeans. This is the basis of what has now come to be known in the lexicon of Nigerian art history as the "natural synthesis" of the "Zaria Rebels". It is this general background that helps us to understand the form and shape of the works of Yusuf Grillo and his contemporaries.

After graduating with a federal government scholarship from the Nigerian College of Art, Science and Technology in Zaria, Yusuf Grillo returned to the same school in 1961 to acquire a post graduate diploma in education. This decision of Grillo was made in compliance with the federal government policy at that period of encouraging government sponsored art graduates into becoming professional educators. Hence, after completing his postgraduate diploma in education in 1961, Yusuf Grillo combined studio practice with teaching at Kings College in Lagos. He eventually ended up lecturing at the

Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, where he rose to head the School of Art and Printing. He played a pivotal role in consolidating the enviable academic art program of the Yaba College of Technology. Grillo is also the founding president and fellow of the society of Nigerian Artists (SNA).

As an artist, Grillo makes use of his western art techniques and training while combining Yoruba and other Nigerian traditional characteristics. He takes the subjects of his artworks from the human activities around him with particular regularity of the Lagos cultural scene. The beauty of Yusuf Grillo's painting is found in figuration, which on most occasions take him months or even years to work on. Grillo generally avoids producing artworks of photographic realism. He loves the use of dark colors, predominantly blue, purple and black, and produces phenomenal works which have formal elements of European modernistic features while incorporating African forms and aesthetics. His works often features half-length or full-figure subjects, depicted in a tightly-cropped picture space, revealing very little information about the surrounding environment of the subject.

Grillo's paintings testify to an enduring interest in the volumetric, architectonic qualities of solid forms. Generally, he stylizes and elongates his figures which are observable in their slimness, grace, elegance and beauty. Nothing better shows the wealth, ingenuity and timelessness of the art of Yusuf Grillo than the seemingly innocuous manner of titling in his art and the deep iconography and meaning that are loaded in them. Iconography and meaning in the work of Grillo could appear very simplistic, innocuous and deceptive. However, a deep study and research into them will reveal the genius in Yusuf Grillo, the master artist.

This retrospective exhibition, taking place in his early 80s, may yet be the grand finale of his illustrious career as an art teacher, administrator and master artist. I feel honored as a collector to have benefited immensely in the enjoyment, pleasure and appreciation of the deep depth of the unique creativity of the works of this great living legend and icon in our shores.

Prince (Engr.) Yemisi Shyllon D. Litt



BARAJE
Oil on board
2011
47.75 X 47 in.

“Let it all hang out” — ‘No holds barred.’
-Yusuf Grillo

Lagos Island’s bustling social life, along with the fashions and trends of women, plays a major role in Grillo’s codification process using mimetic conventional signs and symbols. *Baraje*, an oil painting on a square format canvas, recalls the memory of *Crescendo*, a similar composition of an “ariya” scene. The painting is based on an antithesis composition in a diagonal arrangement of multiple leveled planes featuring dancing drummers and figures. The spatial design in oblique squares of blue are skillfully worked into a reflective distant stream of ultramarine light blue lines, suggestive of window reflections of the dancers in a “cocoa dome” or “kakadu spot”. The legs of the dancers in body twists and bending waists are in frenzied gyration.

Baraje, Kusimilaya, Sindodo and Owanmbe in Ariya are common scenes on Friday outings in Lagos Island. The movements and twists of both the drummers (Agidigbo/ thousand-wire) and the dancers (sisi Eko-omolomo) are composed to direct the eyes around the dance floor in swirling nuances of cyclical energies and vibrations in motion. Unlike the warm colour scheme of *Crescendo*, *Baraje* uses a blueish, violet-tinted lavender and white scheme. There is a mathematical divide of the canvas into planes that counterbalances both the colours in light and shade as well as the formation of people on the dance floor. The drummers in the distance and foreground are masterly costumed to contrast and complement the chosen blue and violet-purple colour scheme of the painting. The gestural twists, genuflections and hands raised high are in complete surrender to the spirit of dance.



BARAJE
Stain Glass
2015
192.5 x 115.5 cm. (46 x 76 in.)



ADIE IRANA
Oil on board
137.2 x 137.2 cm. (54 x 54 in.)

Adie Irana epitomises the memorial rite of passage, particularly the Yoruba philosophy to facilitate the transition of the dead to the afterlife. The solemn procession of such a spiritual journey to the funeral home or burial ground of the deceased is led by a maiden with a white pigeon or chicken. This is an emotional, melancholic and nostalgic sacred rite, where she intermittently plucks the feather of the bird. After the interment of the deceased, who is said to have joined the ways of his or her ancestors, the featherless bird is cooked with the rest of the food for the ceremonial feast.

There is an expression that says that all those who took part in the eating of *Adiye Irana* cannot go scot free, because they owe it to also translate someday. It is both a warning and a prayer. It is a warning in the sense that someday you will translate or join the way of your ancestors to live in the world beyond, since African tradition says that death is an ephemeral illusion of dropping the physical body. If the procession is to be led by one's child, it is a prayer that when you pass on, may you have an offspring who shall perform the memorial rite of passage. This ceremony draws a parallel between adults and children in their viewpoint and understanding of life. While the adults see it as prayer and warning, children see it as a scary event to avoid, including the food from the ceremony. Whether you eat it or not, someday we will all translate.



The obvious importance given to the use of PERSPECTIVE LINES is a salute to Pa Aina Onobolu, whose main subject when he was teaching was PERSPECTIVE - ONE POINT (Parallel Perspective) and TWO POINTS (Angular Perspective). Impeachment is about "POWER MUST CHANGE HANDS".

-Yusuf Grillo

IMPEACHEMENT
Oil on canvas
1994-2014-2015.

DELIVERANCE
Oil on canvas
1994-2014-2015.

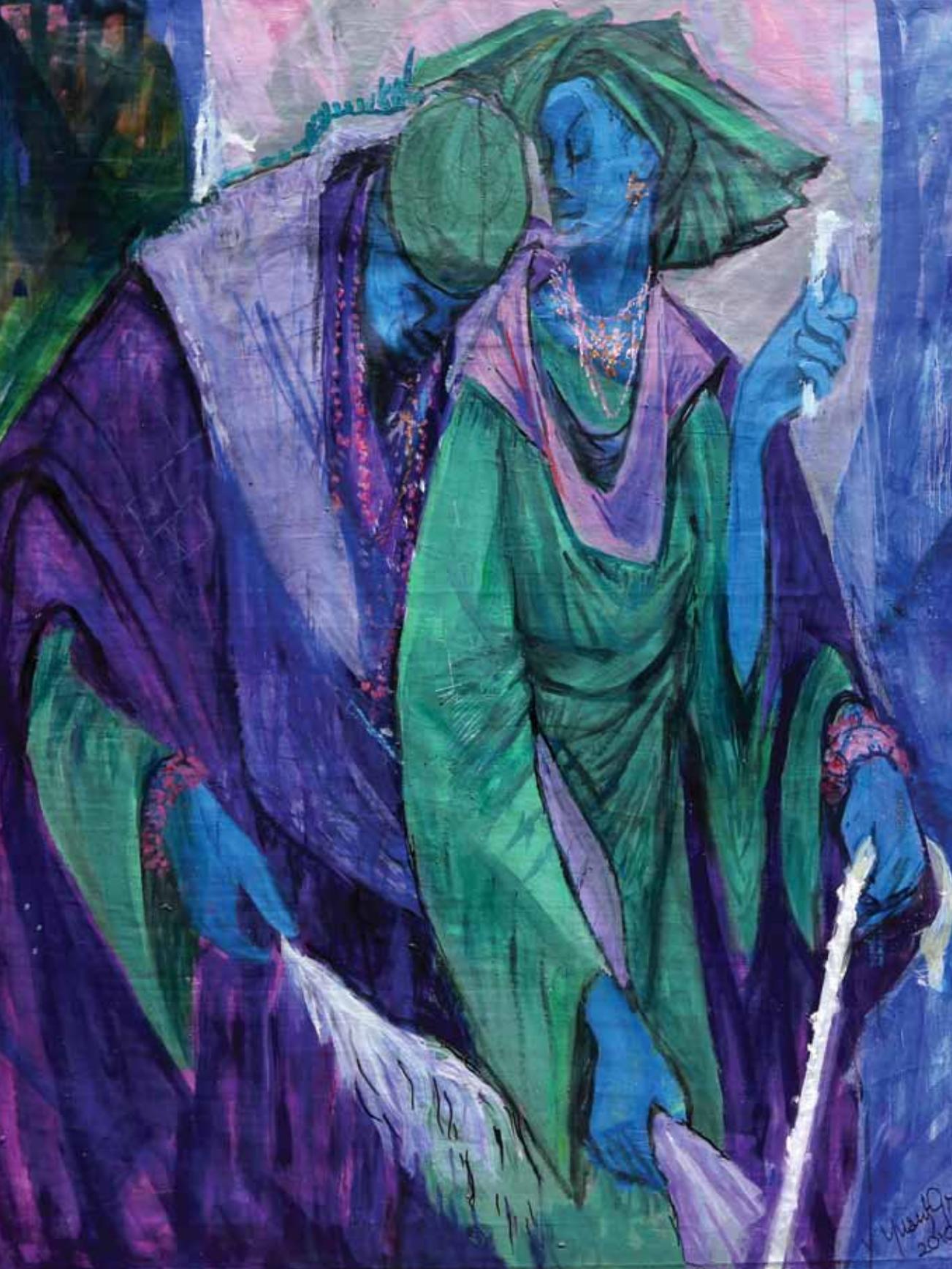




DON'T PICK ANY, MUM
Oil on canvas
2008-2015
60 x 48 in.

Opo-Don't pick any mum is a painting on canvas that continues Grillo's examination of identity and gender issues related to marriages. It follows a story of the inheritance tradition of widows as part of the estate left behind by the dead. The scene depicts a widow and daughter in a dilemma of choosing from three symbolic covered calabashes provided by the husband's family representative. Such a gesture is offered to a widow in a traditional setting, perhaps as a favour to replace the lost husband with another relation of the husband since she was married to the family.

The state of confusion written on her face is shown with blueish sober expression, while the child whispering to the mother's ears is depicted in a complementary pinkish colour, warning her mother not to pick any. Looking closely in detailed scrutiny of this painting, it reveals that all the faces of figures in the surrounding background (of the focal foreground figures) are looking in a direction of the top left corner of the canvas. The use of such dramatic spot illumination is associated with most paintings of early masters. It provides direction, mystery, suspense and the expansiveness of an artwork, suggesting hope, optimism and expectation of the unknown. Like the theatrical lighting of the stage in an opera, this suspense creates inclusion of the onlooker as a participant observer, suggesting a continuous guess of the expectation.



KABIYESI AND OLORI
Stained glass
194 x 109.5 cm. (76.5 X 43.2 In.)
(right)

KABIYESI AND OLORI
Oil on canvas
2010-2012
54 x 44 in.
(left)



Kabiyesi and Olori are two interchangeable works executed in oil and stained glass. The element of design is probably the most important non-verbal code used by Grillo to achieve a highly sophisticated character of the subject matter. Grillo is inseparable from his works. The seeming elongated male figures in his paintings take after his stature, while his wife's physiognomy and dress characteristics have perhaps provided a lifetime model for Grillo's female figures. Both artworks (stained glass and oil painting), rendered in a purple and green coloured scheme, seems to recall the artist's family portrait.



OBA DAUDA (KING DAVID)
Oil on canvas
2014-2015

Gesturally satirical, Grillo ascribes the warm red colour of Oba Dauda to represent Abuja, the Nigerian capital city, where corruption, fraud and lust for moral values are said to be at its peak. This metaphor is in parallel to the slums metaphorically created at the lower part of the composition. This slum could be in any place in Nigeria, and is oppositely rendered with sublimed cool colours of hazy grey and purple on a greenish background, suggesting Nigeria's rich flora.

The hunter, a subject in Oba Dauda's kingdom, is positioned walking off to game, while the wife and another figure in silhouette are precariously or suspiciously located in a dingy tiny corner, with subdued cool green and purple colours. The artist employs an exaggerated and comical rendering approach in presenting the visual narrative.

"Oba Dauda", surrounded by his subjects in a lofty, enviable and vibrant position, is depicted in a palatious environment of power and authority. Is he being confronted with the temptation of lust for the hunter's wife? The visual narrative of the old time biblical story is here adapted in a contemporary sense to make a social commentary.



LEAD DRUMMER
Oil on canvas
2003-2009
152 x 91 cm. (60 x 36 in.)

*Lead Drummer -
We call it 'talking drum'
but in the hands of a
Master drummer, it is
as versatile as a pipe
organ. The drum stick
selectively hits not only
points on the circular
skin, its circumference
but even outside it.
The muscles around
the Armpit, the fingers
on the other hand and
at rare times the thigh
and knee can produce
CHORDS, TREMOLO,
and STACCATO.*

-Yusuf Grillo



LEAD DRUMMER
Stained glass
2003-2009
192 x 115.5 cm. (75.5 x 45.5 in.)



MY TAIYE
Stained glass
2003-2009
192.5 x 115.5 cm. (75.5 x 45.5 in.)

MY TAIYE
Oil on canvas
2003-2009
122 x 91.8 cm. (48 x 36.5 in.)

Taiye is the dead twin whose soul is now entrapped as an Ibeji figurine. The Yorubas worship IBEJI and there are so many stories, beliefs and songs about them.

-Yusuf Grillo





NO THANKS
Oil on canvas
2009-2012
137 X 122 cm. (54 x 48 in.)



NO THANKS
Stained glass
2003-2009
183 X 107cm. (72 x 45 in.)



POST KHUTBA DILEMA

Oil on board
2009-2012
53.5 x 24 in.

Post Khutba Dilema-After the sermon and *Opo* are paintings coded with moral lessons and criticism of man's temptation in areas of weakness. Just as individuals are working hard on areas of weaknesses, there is also the collective weakness of nations to address. The painting *After the sermon* is a subtle criticism and social commentary using metaphor in the visual narrative. Man, families and nations all need to strive for spiritual growth.

The title of this work brings to mind Paul Gauguin's painting entitled *The vision after the sermon (Jacob wrestling with the Angel)* (1898). The struggle of body, emotion and mind (lower self) in wish for greater spiritual freedom is satirically expressed through a similar wrestling bout between an Imam (Islamic cleric) and his wife over lust for a young lady. The Imam is being held back in cautionary protest by his wife in a dramatic "soul saving" struggling effort.

The Lagos central mosque is set in the background. The Imam and his wife occupy the middle ground, while the young lady is depicted in the foreground. The delicate position on the lower leveled ground represents the "fall" in both physical and spiritual consciousness of the Imam if allowed to follow the young girl. In a typical expressionist's drive for an inward approach to subject matter, Grillo is expressing a psychological inner viewpoint on a common social problem in contemporary families. Grillo explains that "the Imam is unaware of the lower ground in front of him, hence the wife is preventing him from continuing the pursuit".



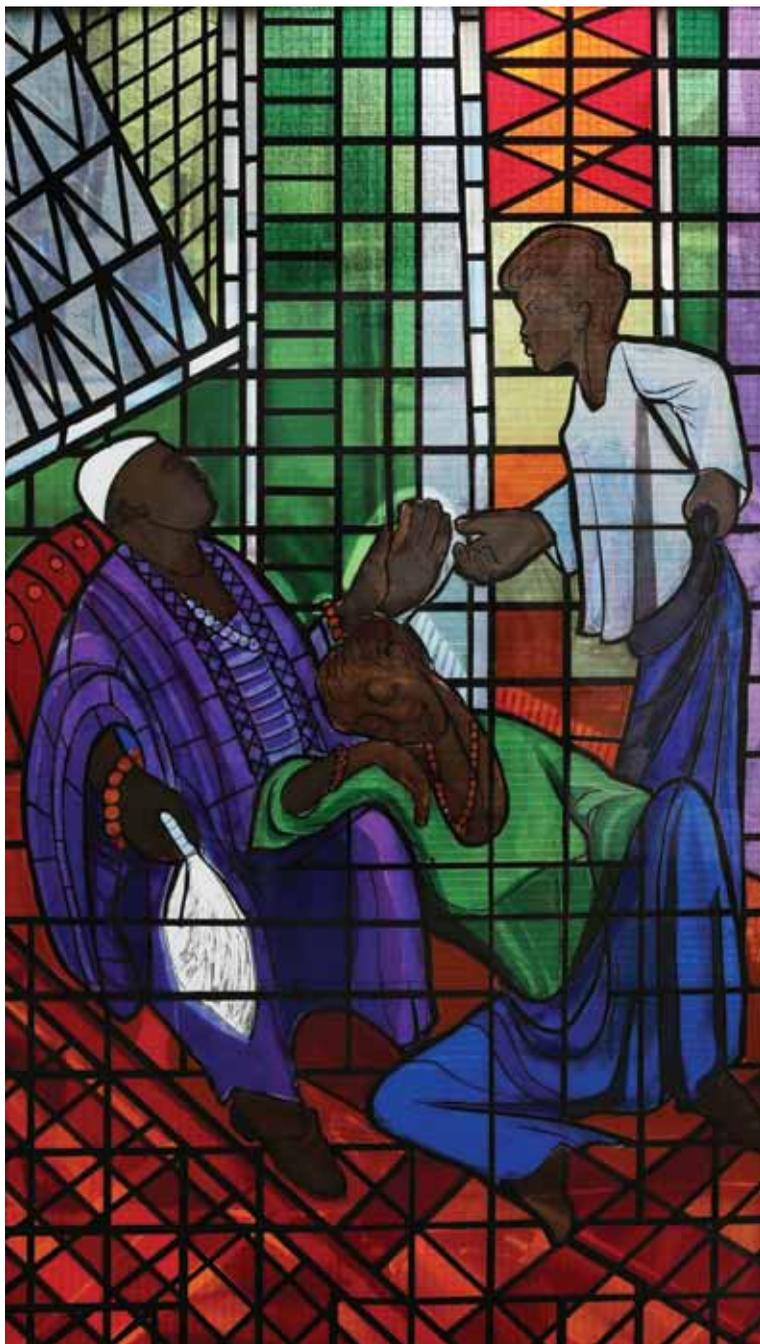
YAFOJO

Oil on canvas
137.2 x 91.5 cm. (54 X36 in.)

Yafajo-lya omo oni moin moin

The Agbole-Isale Eko environment, with "face me I face you" shanty architecture, caught Grillo's fancy for yet another composition addressing moral values in our society. The integration of certain traditional African iconographic forms and structures in his paintings makes his artworks readily familiar and consumable by the onlooker. The usage of familiar architectural structures and a sense of religious mysteries are common visual metaphors employed to generate a recognisable result for his audience.

Yafajo-lya omo oni moin moin (child of the bean cake merchant) is a typical example of paintings coded with life stories from Isale-Eko. The socio-cultural context speaks to the temptations and challenges involved in raising children, especially the girl child in the city. Such vulnerable circumstance had arisen, which led to the name 'Yafajo', literally meaning "stay off the rain".



MYRIAM & AMATA
Stained glass
192 x 115.5 cm. (75.5 x 45.5 in.)

RETROSPECTIVE WORKS



CAN IT BE TRUE
Oil on board
1986-1992
122 x 91.5 cm. (48 x 36 in.)
Collection of Mr & Mrs Joe Obiago



THE FLIGHT-NOR MOON BY NIGHT
Oil on canvas
2001-2007
122 x 122 cm. (48 x 48 in.)
Collection of Mr & Mrs Joe Obiago



AYI & TAYI
Oil on board
Restored in 2008
122 x 84 cm. (48 x 33 in.)
Collection of Mr Sammy Olagbaju



HE MUST PROVIDE WINE
Oil on board
1998-2007
212 x 185 cm.
Collection of Dr & Mrs Folarin Gbadebo-Smith



GIRL IN BLUE
Oil on board
1963
33 x 22 in.
Collection of Mr Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede

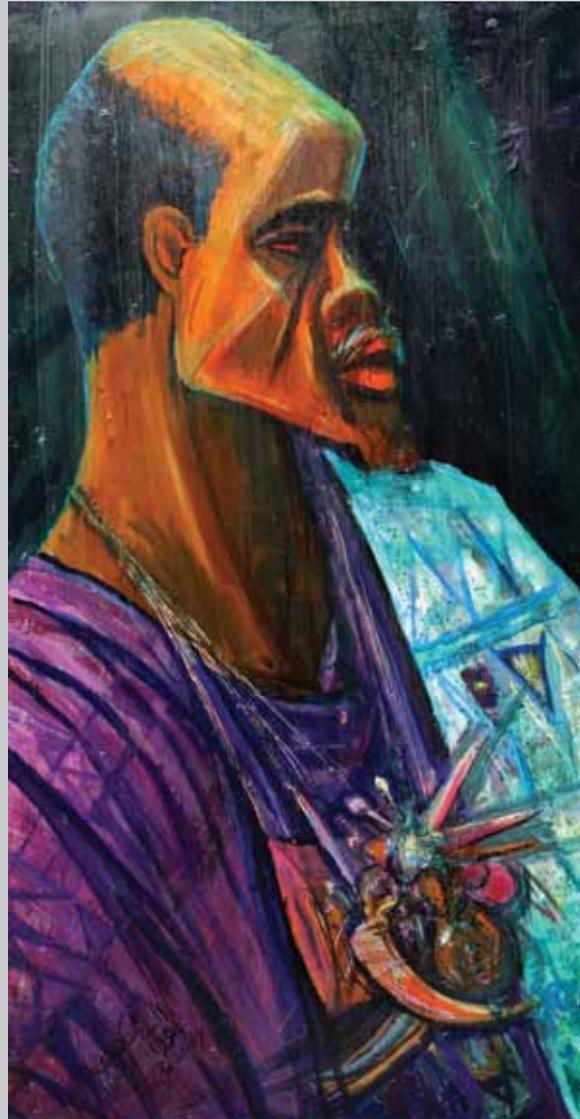


KOFO
Oil on masonite board
60 x 90 cm. (23.5 x 35.5 in.)
Collection of Mr Olayinka Fisher

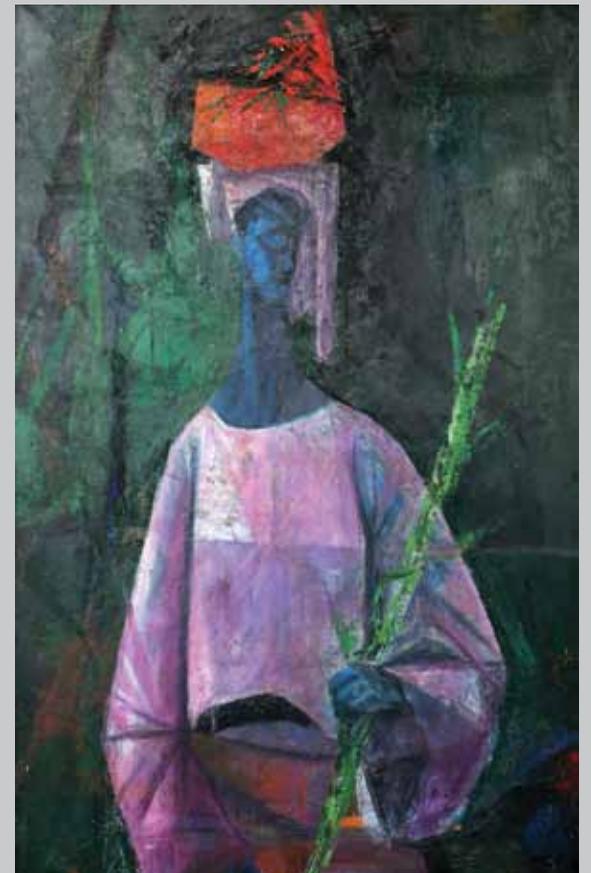


ABENUGONGO
Oil on board
1994 (restored in 2007)
122 x 61 cm. (48 x 24 in.)
Collection of Omo-Oba Yemisi Shyllon

THREATENED INNOCENCE
Oil on board
1999-2002
122 x 61 cm. (48 x 24 in.)
Collection of Mr Olayinka Fisher



DRUMMERS' RETURN
Oil on board
1983-1999
122 x 107 cm.
Collection of Omo-Oba Yemisi Shyllon



HARVEST
Oil on board
95 x 63 cm. (37.5 in.)
Collection of Mr G. Hathiramani



BLUE MOON
Oil on board
1960
60 x 60 cm. (23.5 x 23.5 in.)
Collection of Mr Harpal Rhandawa



COME WITH ME
Oil on board
1992-2003
122 x 91.5 cm. (48 x 36 in.)
Collection of Mrs Amisha Hathiramani



WOMAN
Oil on board
87 x 56.5 cm. (34 x 22 in.)
Collection of Chief Ademola Edu



WOMAN IN PINK
Oil on board
86 x 56 cm. (33 x 22 in.)
Collection of Chief Ademola Edu



EYO
Oil on board
111 x 87 cm. (43 x 34 in.)
Collection of Chief Ademola Edu



OLOGUN
Oil on board
1966
122 x 56 cm. (48 x 22 in.)
Collection of Mr Faysal El-Khalil

MOTHER AND CHILD
Stain glass
2010
180,5 x 72 cm. (71 x 28.5 in.)
The Chellaram Collection



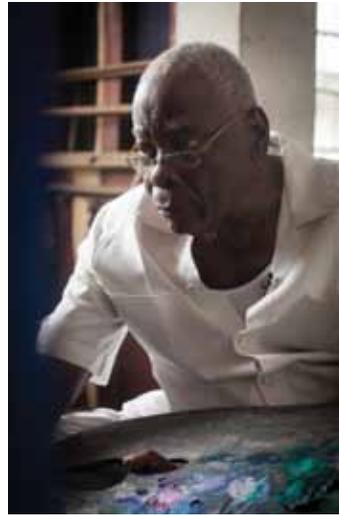
THE SQUARE
Stain glass
2010
183 x 96.5 cm. (72 x 38 in.)
The Chellaram Collection



MYRIAM & AMATA
Oil on canvas
1999-2007
122 x 122 cm. (48 x 48 in.)
The Chellaram Collection



THE RISEN CHRIST
Oil on board
105 x 54 cm. (41.5 x 21.5 in.)
Collection of Kofo Majekodunmi



Photography:
Photographs of paintings: George Osodi
Photographs of Yusuf Grillo, Kavita Chellaram, Kunle Filani, Mike Omagae by Medina Dugger

Yusuf Grillo: Universalising Yoruba Consciousness
By Kunle Filani (MFA PhD) is an artist, critic and art

Analysis of Selected Works
By Mike Omoighe Chief Lecturer, Painting and Drawing, Department of Fine Art,
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