

SAMUEL NNOROM



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review

Posted on:
19/11/2025

Author:
Alicja Kuczyńska

Emirates Perspectives.

10 Artists to Watch at the Abu Dhabi Art Fair.

Samuel Nnorom

Nigerian artist [Samuel Nnorom](#) → (b. 1990) transforms everyday materials into vivid sculptural "bubble" forms that explore connection, identity, and resilience. Working from Nsukka, he repurposes discarded Ankara fabrics, clothing remnants, foam, and fibres, stitching and rolling them into clusters that both reference the domestic and serve as metaphors for social interaction, survival, and communal belonging, blending tactile process with poetic form.

Nnorom is associated with the New Nsukka School of Art and founded the Ulo Nka Residency, supporting emerging artists through fully funded residencies and professional studio guidance. His practice has been recognised internationally, with awards including the Ettore e Ines Fico Prize at Artissima (2023), the Art for Change Global Prize, Saatchi Gallery (2022), and the Strauss & Co / Cassirer Welz Award (2021). At the Abu Dhabi Art Fair, he's presented as part of the *Focus: Nigeria Spotlight*.



Samuel Nnorom, Yellow Roses Rough Diamond, 2023. © Courtesy Galerie REVEL and the artist; Photo by Studio Brinth



Samuel Nnorom, © Courtesy Galerie REVEL and the artist

ALIMI ADEWALE,
CORNELIUS
ANNOR, MR
DOODLE, QIAN
JIAHUA, SAMUEL
NNOROM,
DEBORAH SEGUN,
CHEN YUFAN
Deconfiguration[s]

Shanghai—Pearl Lam is pleased to present *Deconfiguration[s]*, a group exhibition which emerges from a critique of traditional curatorial logic where the practice of subjecting artworks to an overarching theme may delimit audiences within a set interpretation. Drawing from the concept in cloud computing that denotes the decommissioning of systems via revoking access rules, *Deconfiguration[s]* manifests itself as an experiment and focuses on artists whose practices engage with figuration in different formats. With the assistance of different Large Language Models (LLMs), we have invited nine artists, including Alimi Adewale, Cornelius Annor, Chen Yufan, Mr Doodle, Samuel Nnorom, Babajide Olatunji, Qian Jianhua, Deborah Segun and Zhang Muda, to provoke an interplay of multilateral or even contradictory narratives, while re-sorting the artworks as impromptu entities that are ready for public engagement.

Samuel Nnorom is fascinated by "existence", being present, human, and rooted in a universal space beyond race, colour, or location. Using Ankara cloth as a primary medium, he builds up bubble forms evoking eggs and atoms. The genesis of electromagnetic force and life itself is revealed through stitching, pulling, stuffing, rolling, and sewing. His methods signify the connection between an individual and community within a unified structure and its social dynamics.



La Fondation Blachère a accueilli 11 000 visiteurs à Bonnieux pour l'exposition 'Sensibilités vaudou'

Par Fabien BONNIEUX

Publié le 02/10/25 à 09:15

LaProvence.



Samuel Nnorom, ici avec son œuvre immersive lors de l'exposition "Sensibilités Vaudou".

/ photo Jérôme REY

Un succès pour la plateforme d'art contemporain africain, qui plus est dans un village de 1 200 habitants.

Christine Allain-Launay Blachère, commissaire (avec Jean Michel Massing) de l'exposition de la [Fondation Blachère](#), *Sensibilités vaudou*, à [Bonnieux](#), l'avait annoncé d'emblée : *"Nous n'avons pas voulu faire une exposition sensationnaliste."*

Notre but était de mettre en avant le regard que posent des artistes contemporains africains sur le vaudou, qu'ils soient initiés à ces rites ou pas du tout. On parle de spiritualité avant tout."

À lire aussi : [Bonnieux : Christine Blachère expose 22 artistes actuels du Zimbabwe](#)

Verdict : clôturée il y a quelques jours, l'exposition a attiré cet été 11 000 visiteurs, venus découvrir les œuvres de Léonce Raphaël Agbodjelou (Bénin), Didier Ahadji (Togo), Mamadou Ballo (Côte d'Ivoire), Boukare Bonkougou (Burkina Faso), Calixte Dakpogan (Bénin) ou Januario Jano (Angola).

La prochaine exposition de la Fondation Blachère, intitulée *Sinon J'oublie*,

accueillera dès le 16 octobre 37 artistes, entre photographies et créations contemporaines.



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MINIARTEXTIL 34: a contemporary reflection on desire through textile art

by JULIET ART MAGAZINE • 1 AUGUST 2025 • INTERVIEWS

From August 9 to September 21, 2025, the prestigious Palazzo del Broletto in Como will host the thirty-fourth edition of **MINIARTEXTIL**, one of the most important international exhibitions dedicated to contemporary fiber art. Curated by the Arte&Arte Association, the exhibition "Eternal Desire" proposes a profound reflection on one of the most universal forces of the human spirit: desire as creative energy and a driving force for connection. Fifty-four artists from eleven different countries – from Italy to North Korea, from Japan to Nigeria – will present works ranging from mini-textiles to large multimedia installations. Among the prominent figures are international names such as Portuguese Joana Vasconcelos, Franco-Malagasy Joel Andrianomearisoa, Nigerian Samuel Nnorom from the New Nsukka School of Art, Italian-Argentine Kela Cremaschi, Iranian Hiva Alizadeh, English Anna Ray, and Italian Giuseppe Coco.



Samuel Nnorom, "Bloom", 2022, African wax print fabric, 115 x 56 x 66 cm, courtesy Primo Marella Gallery, Milano

The event, now in its 34th edition, confirms Como as a global reference point for artistic research in the textile field, transforming threads, knots and weaves into a universal language to explore the theme of desire: not as possession, but as creative tension that generates beauty, relationship, and meaning. Behind this interesting cultural project is **Mimmo Totaro**, artist and curator who since 1991, together with **Nazzarena Bortolaso**, has brought **MINIARTEXTIL** to life, transforming it from a collection of small-scale works into one of the most accredited exhibitions internationally. We met with him to explore the vision that has guided this unique event in the Italian panorama for over three decades.

NEWS

Art Basel Hong Kong 2025 Receipts: Collectors Want Content

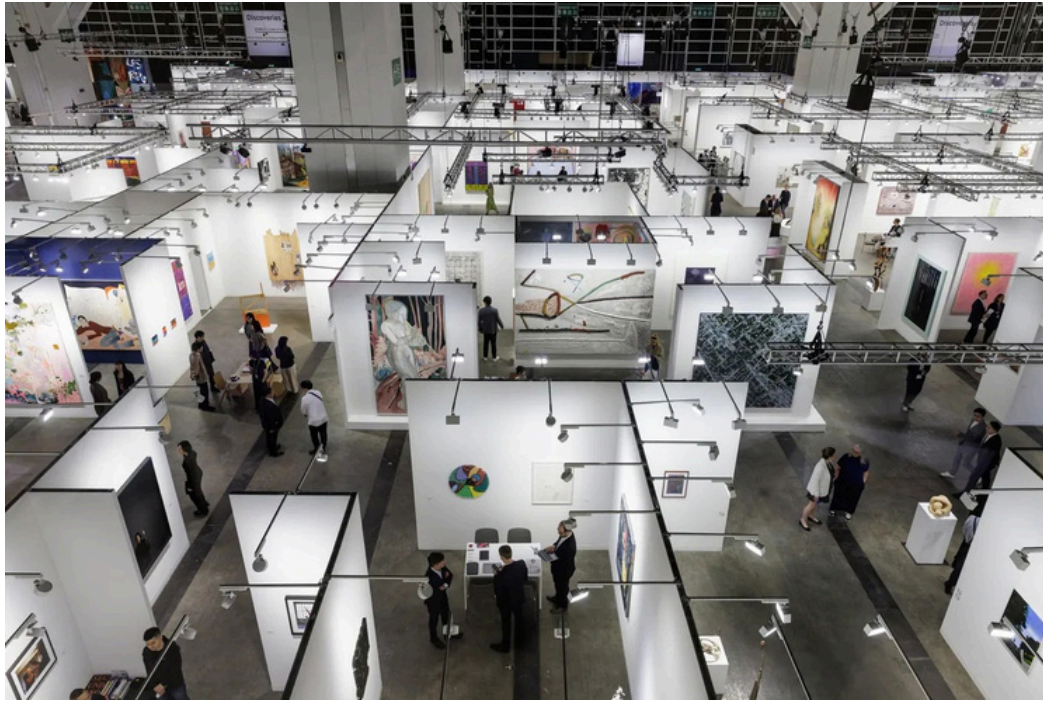
Has Hong Kong managed to grow its status as Asia's art hub in this year's edition of Art Basel? Diana d'Arenberg reports.

By Diana d'Arenberg – 29 March 2025, Hong Kong

By the time Art Basel Hong Kong's preview rolled around on Wednesday, visitors had already enjoyed a packed schedule of events, parties and exhibitions across the city. There was a lizard in a boxing ring and a sonic assault of screeching synth at the M+ party on Monday night; a goth Butoh performance to Rammstein in Sotheby's grotto exhibition space; and Supper Club kicked off its programme of nightly performances with Hong Kong-based artist Samuel Swope being blasted with an industrial-sized fan to the sound of eerie chanting. Meanwhile, the closest guests got to communism in Hong Kong was at the Swire Artist's Party, where an irate queue, the result of a tech failure, called to mind Soviet-era bread lines.



Samuel Nnorom, *Retro Africa*, Art Basel Hong Kong (28–30 March 2025). Courtesy Art Basel.



Art Basel Hong Kong (28–30 March 2025). Courtesy Art Basel.

Established galleries reported sales at a brisk pace in the first hours of the fair's preview. Notable big-ticket transactions were reported by David Zwirner who had sold an 'Infinity Net' painting by Yayoi Kusama for \$3.5 million (all figures USD unless stated), a Michaël Borremans painting for \$1.6 million, and works by Elizabeth Peyton and Félix González-Torres each for \$900,000. Thaddaeus Ropac reported over \$5 million in sales across the first two days, including a Georg Baselitz painting for \$1.3 million on the first day, a Daniel Richter painting for \$450,000, followed by a \$1.5 million screenprint by Roy Lichtenstein on the second preview day.

Founder Thaddaeus Ropac called it a good start to the fair: 'Admittedly, ahead of the fair we weren't sure how it would go, but there is positive energy here—a sense of cautious optimism which is translating into sales. We're seeing a bit more of an international attendance compared to the past couple of years too, with Europeans returning.'

Over at Hauser & Wirth's booth, a sculpture by Louise Bourgeois sold for \$2 million to a collector from China, a Christina Quarles painting for \$1.35 million, and a 2025 canvas by Avery Singer was placed in a Hong Kong collection for \$575,000. Meanwhile, David Kordansky sold a Jonas Wood painting for \$650,000.

Many smaller galleries, however, didn't see the same level of sales, with a slower pace amidst the economic uncertainty plaguing the art market in recent years. Despite a buzzing atmosphere, collectors were subdued in their approach to buying—no longer rushing to buy as they did during the art boom of the 2010s. Local artist Adrian Wong described the fair as 'more humane' this year: 'You can have conversations with people'. Indeed, gallerists chit-chatted with visitors without looking over their shoulders for a worthier game.

A gallerist at Cape Town-based Blank Projects, where textile and bead tapestry works by South African artist Igshaan Adams are exhibited in the Kabinett single artist showcase, commented that there is 'none of the European frenetic art fair energy where people are pushing each other over to get to an artwork'. Nonetheless, the gallery had already sold a couple of works priced at \$95,000–100,000. 'So, we are more relaxed and enjoying the pace,' he said.

Textile art features heavily in this year's edition. Retro Africa presents the works of 35-year-old Nigerian artist Samuel Nnorom, whose intricate knotted textile wall sculptures, priced at \$11,500–22,000, had mostly sold out on the first day. Shanghai's Vanguard Gallery presents a long, eye-catching antique carpet from Lin Tianmiao, embroidered with sexist phrases about women, which was still available at 2,700,000 CNY (\$377,000). Madrid gallery Sabrina Amrani features a Kabinett section of works from the 1970s to 1980s by Catalan textile art pioneer, Josep Grau-Garriga, priced between 12,000–75,000 EUR.

Forging an Afro-Asian Cultural Exchange: An Interview with Retro Africa's Dolly Kola-Balogun

ART FAIR, INTERVIEW

Through participation in Art Basel Hong Kong and, most recently, Tokyo Gendai, Retro Africa's founder, Dolly Kola Balogun, is discovering a growing market for African Art



Retro Africa Booth at Tokyo Gendai, (front) Yusuff Aina, *Eniyan Bronze (limited)*, 2023. Bronze, 11 4/5 x 7 9/10 x 5 9/10 in. (back) Samuel Nnorom, *We Keep Sticking and Moving*, 2024. African Print fabric and cotton twine, 72 2/5 x 70 9/10 x 14 3/5 in. Courtesy of Retro Africa

Nigerian dealer Dolly Kola-Balogun has long sought to establish new places for artistic visibility beyond her gallery's location in the Nigerian capital of Abuja. Since establishing her gallery in 2015, in addition to maintaining a strong program of exhibitions at home, she's traveled the world to present her artists in art fairs and gallery collaborations in Singapore, New York, London, Hong Kong, Miami and Seoul. The 30-year-old passionate and determined gallerist is not only helping to grow the contemporary art scene in Nigeria but also place African art on the map. Over the last few years, the Asian market has been a strong and increasing focus.

“I’ve always said that Asia is the only place in which I believe that authentic and honest dialogue between African and Africa and the world can take place that isn’t sort of marred by historical grievances, events, and the coloring of the perception of the colonial experience,” explains Kola-Balogun. “Asia and Africa in dialogue is really just two strangers meeting and wondering what we have in common and what we have that differs.”

Most recently, she participated in Tokyo Gendai in Yokohama, Japan in early July with the group exhibition “Heart to Heart: A Sonata of Love and Being” presenting works by Yusuff Aina Abogunde, Henri Abraham Univers, Abe Ogunlende, and Samuel Nnorom. The fair, in its second edition, aims to place Japan on the global art map. While doing so, it also, as demonstrated by Retro Africa’s participation and sound sales, it also showed its dedication to showcasing a cross-cultural display of art.

“Tokyo is the third Asian city I’ve exhibited in over the past year,” said Kola-Balogun. “I did Hong Kong in March 2023 then I did Singapore’s Art SG in January and now Tokyo Gendai. Tokyo specifically was an incredible experience to and not simply because of the sales but because of the engagement.”

The gallery sold three out of the four artists they presented: Samuel Nnorom, a rising Nigerian artist renowned for his tapestry-like sculptural works, sold two works for \$10,000 and \$17,000 each; Nigerian painter Abe Ogunlende, known for his pastel-toned paintings comprising polka dots and minimalistic subject matter, sold two works for \$5,000 and \$2,000; multidisciplinary Lagos-based Yusuff Aina, sold a work for \$3,000 and great interest was generated in the painting of Franco-Burkinabe artist Henri Abraham Univers.

The steady sales, like those Dola-Balogun experienced in Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong, is proof of the continual allure of contemporary art from the African continent and especially in new markets such as Asia.

Significantly, the gallery sold to the Taguchi Art Collection, one of the most notable collections in Japan. “What was surprising to us was the diversity of the collection,” notes Dola-Balogun. “It already has the works of several contemporary African artists, including Yinka Shonibare. And Miwa Taguchi has great knowledge of the African contemporary art scene.”

Kola-Balogun is keen to nurture a dialogue and exchange between Africa and Asia and for this reason she’s become an African pioneer in the Asian art market. Retro Africa was the only gallery from Africa in Singapore Art SG and in Tokyo Gendai.

“Asia has been a market I’ve been speaking about for a long time,” she says, stating that before the pandemic she had goals to open a gallery in Seoul and Miami.”

Kola-Balogun believes that the Asia and Africa dialogue doesn’t have a history of contention. “The conversation can be done in a completely honest and authentic way, presenting oneself as one is and telling our stories without caveats,” she says. “That’s a very refreshing experience because you are aware now that the reception that you are experiencing is entirely based on how well your narrative resonates, how well your story is told, and how deeply one connects to what you are showing. It’s almost entirely meritocratic.”

She emphasizes how when she shows in the United States and Europe, she must be US and Europe she must be “mindful of unspoken rules, sayings, doings, beliefs, racial tensions, et cetera, that in Asia I do not feel.”

Retro Africa’s Asian trajectory gained momentum during the 10th edition of Art Basel Hong Kong in March 2023. Retro Africa was the first gallery from West Africa to participate in the fair. Showing in the Discoveries section, Kola-Balogun presented a solo booth of works by Nigerian artist Victor Ehikhamenor titled *Always at The Edge* featuring elaborate pieces made from thousands of plastic rosaries intricately sewn together in the artist’s signature medium of “tapestry” priced in a range of \$45,000 to 190,000.

“For me, it was really important for us to come to Hong Kong for our debut with Art Basel,” Retro Africa founder Dolly Kola-Balogun told *Galerie* at the time. “Of course, the easiest thing would be to go to Basel Miami or Basel Basel, but I feel that contemporary African art, which is taking off, off globally, needs representation in the Asian market. There has been very little focus on this market.”

Ehikhamenor’s work in Hong Kong incorporated objects representative of Benin culture and the Catholic faith to examine how culture, religion, nature and the remnants of colonialism continue to be inextricably intertwined. Simultaneous to Hong Kong, the artist’s work was being staged at Gagosian Gallery on London’s Britannia Street titled “Rites of Passage.”

CULTBYTES

1-54's African Artists to Watch and Their Hybrid Approaches to Textiles in 2024

Carson Woś (<https://Cultbytes.Com/Author/Carsonwos/>)

May 5, 2024



Collector viewing The African Art Hub's booth featuring textile-inspired paintings by Nigerian artist Ibrahim Bamidele and South African artist Reggie Khumalo. Photo: © Parker Calvert / CKA, courtesy of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair New York, 2024.

When most people think of textiles or fiber art they may think of crocheting, embroidering, or tufting, which are all utilized by expert technicians of each medium within the 10th edition of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair at Chelsea's Starrett-Lehigh Building. However what makes the fair so exciting is that the majority of artists pushed beyond the bounds of traditional techniques to create hybrid objects or to engage regional materials to communicate potent meanings centered on sustainability, labor, and diaspora identities expanding the discourse within this field of materiality.

Here is a brief selection of noteworthy contemporary African and African diasporic artists working in the textile arts at 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and what their exhibited works contribute to the genre.



Kates-Ferri Project's booth featuring fiber artworks (order left to right) by Caribbean-based American artist Theda Sandiford, South African artist Turiya Magadlela, and Nigerian artist Samuel Nnorom. Photo: © Casey Kelbaugh / CKA, courtesy of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair New York, 2024.

Fiber Art Sculpture

Fiber art sculptures took center stage at Kates-Ferri Projects' booth presenting three distinct approaches to the medium today. Theda Sandiford's practice is rooted in ecological advocacy participating in weekly beach cleanups to remove plastic detritus from the shores of St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands to then intuitively transform these found objects into looping, tendril-like wall-mounted sculptures. These enigmatic yet playful constructions serve as beacons for promoting greater ocean health awareness, and proposing an optimistic outlook for an individual's impact on remedying our global plight of plastics pollution. Samuel Nnorom also upcycles fabrics to create dense sculptural topographies that crest and sweep across the wall as vivacious abstract accumulations of knotted bundles of patterned textiles. These spherical protuberances both disrupt and amplify the motifs within the original fabrics' dyed or printed patterns, obscuring their meaning within the vernacular cultural symbolism of traditional African textiles. Building up these surfaces with cloth scrap categorized as waste from factory floors as filling, Nnorom also simultaneously dismantles hierarchies of value within artisanal practices versus design production through his reuse practice. Elevating scrap to the realm of fine art sculpture, while shrouding recognizably celebrated batik textiles in service to the work's unified textural whole, each sculpture acts as a sophisticated critique on the making of meaning ascribed to a full range of fiber production occurring within our current cultural milieu. Turiya Magadlela on the other hand takes a very sleek approach to the perennial frustration of ripped pantyhose, transforming these scarred sartorial carcasses into abstract-expressionist-inflected painterly compositions. Magadlela's practice of repurposing discarded fabrics centers an alluring aesthetic experience to draw the viewer into a subtle discussion surrounding gender-based identity politics and the colonization of black bodies. The work also distorts the field's terminology of categorization as a surface too mimetic of painting to be a sculptural fiber art practice, yet a found object collage process akin to quilting (in its directly sewn layering of transparent textiles), but evades that label as well due to routinely fooling the viewer's eye from a distance seeming to be an entirely painted surface.

VIEWPOINT

July 23, 2023

Playing with Ankara Fabric: Samuel Nnorom's textile incantations of truth, conspiracy and identity.

By George C. Odoh

Nnorom's fast-rising profile and legitimate posturing as one of the most exciting contemporary Nigerian artists derive from the dynamic and fascinating landscape of his textile-based sculpture installations. The stylistic architecture of his art is firmly rooted in the culture of radical practice that foregrounds the art tradition of the Fine and Applied Arts Department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he is presently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) in sculpture.

Although the idea of using textiles as a medium for artistic expression started before his postgraduate studies at the Nsukka art department, it was his exposure to the intellectual and experimental disposition of the Nsukka art department that set the current trajectory of his art which is driven by the use of African wax prints (Ankara fabric) to explore the multifarious landscape of human experiences.

The artist's full realisation of the conceptual depth and artistic potentials of the textile-driven bubble concept occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the bid to relate his art to the emergent realities engendered by the coronavirus outbreak, he began to connect the material properties of the Ankara fabric and the narratives surrounding its provenance to the rhetoric that framed conversations on the COVID-19 outbreak. He drew comparisons between the not-so-clear history about the origin of the Ankara fabric and the accusations and counter-accusations between Western countries and China regarding the origin of the coronavirus. Again, he saw in the visible and hidden structures of the textile bubble, a metaphorical codification of the litany of truths, half-truths, lies, denials, and concealments that characterised governments' and the public's responses to the pandemic.

Furthermore, with the emerging practice of the COVID-19 social bubble, which allowed for more in-person social interactions beyond one's household while still potentially limiting the risk of COVID-19 transmission, his understanding of the bubble through the interpretive lenses of biology, chemistry, and physics assumed a much more structural and thematic significance in his work. Thus, the clustering of bubble-like structures in his works became an expressive tool for interrogating the dynamics of contemporary life during and *After the*

Pandemic the COVID-19 pandemic. Nnorom's use of the Ankara fabric in 'clothing' his artistic and social vision also found both literal and metaphorical validation in its visual enunciation of the collocation 'the fabric of society,' often used to reference the social order and its many threads.

The spellbinding encounter with the works of Samuel Nnorom is an invitation into a mesmerising world where beautifully orchestrated colours and the iterative use of globular forms animate the visual energy of its textile landscape. It is also a world ruled by uncertainties, a place where truth, conspiracy, and identity are not only vigorously contested, negotiated, deconstructed, and reconstructed, but also function as the artist's primary inquisitorial tools for interrogating the varying subjectivities that shape the social, political, and cultural spheres of society.

Samuel Nnorom is an artist of the now and the future. The visual incantations engendered by his experimental and evolving studio practice will continue to calcify his bold artistic footprints in the global art scene.

Odoh is a Senior Lecturer, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Black Rock Senegal, Kehinde Wiley's Closely Watched Artist Residency, Has Welcomed a New Class of 16 Artists—Meet Them Here

The program received a record number of applicants for its fourth year.



Three artists from Black Rock's class of 2020. Photo: Mamadou Gomis. Courtesy of Black Rock Senegal.

Taylor Dafoe. July 5, 2023

Black Rock Senegal, the West African residency program launched in 2019 by Kehinde Wiley, has announced its next crop of fellows.

The group comprises 16 artists of differing practices from around the world, each of whom will participate in the program from August of this year through May of next. They'll stay—in staggered, one-to-three-month increments—at Black Rock's compound in the capital city of Dakar, which offers multi-story apartments and private studios, as well as a spa, gym, pool, and professional kitchen.



2023–24 Black Rock Senegal artists (clockwise from left): Ambrose Rhapsody Murray, Chase Alexander Johnson, Christina Kimeze, and Keith Tutt II. Photographers (clockwise from left): Toni Esposito, William Rouse, Leonardo Vandal, and Joseph J. Pash Patrick. Courtesy of Black Rock Senegal.

Also on site are Wiley’s own work and living spaces. He collaborated with Senegalese architect Abib Djenne to design the amenity-filled building, which prioritizes creativity and communal interaction over everything else.

“There’s a level of quality that I demand,” Wiley said of the compound in an interview with *Vogue* last year. “I want to set the bar for the way that you think about an experience in West Africa.”

Indeed, for Wiley, the residency program offers more than just space and time to its fellows; it also gives its guests a gateway to the continent on which it lives.

“Black Rock stands as the direct answer to my desire to have an uncontested relationship with Africa, the filling in of a large void that I share with many African Americans,” he said upon founding the program in 2019. “With this project I wanted to explore my own personal relationship with Africa while inviting artists to do the same and to galvanize the growing artistic and creative energies that exist in Africa in an increasing measure with the addition of diverse, international, creative possibility.”



2023–24 Black Rock Senegal artists (clockwise from left): Nicolas Lambelet Coleman, Makhone Diop, Ardeshir Tabrizi, and Kwabena Sekyi Appiah-Nti. Photos (clockwise from left): Charlie Wheeler (Courtesy of PM/AM Gallery), Malick Sadio, Claire Lopacki, and Yeray Sabandar. Courtesy of Black Rock Senegal.

Among the 16 Black Rock residents of 2023–24 are painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers, authors, and composers—though most fall into the murky category of multidisciplinary.

The first-generation American artist Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola, for instance, transforms durags, hairbrushes, and other symbols of Black culture into powerful paintings and sculptures. Ange Frédéric Koffi, a photographer and installation artist from Côte d'Ivoire, turns his lens on fleeting moments that speak to broader issues of displacement and coloniality in West Africa.

Samuel Nnorom, from Nigeria, stitches together elaborate sculptures from foam balls covered in Ankara wax fabric and other textiles, while the Australian Lilah Benetti makes what they call auto-ethnographic films that weave together sociocultural issues and reflections on the Black Queer experience.



2023–24 Black Rock Senegal artists (clockwise from left): Lilah Benetti, Ange-Frédéric Koffi, Maurice Carlos Ruffin, and Anthony Akinbola. Photos (clockwise from left): Sara Lorusso, Matthieu Croizier, Vaughn D. Taylor, and Elliot Jerome Brown Jr. Courtesy of Black Rock Senegal.

“I am struck by the exuberant, joyous, free-form and colorful character of so many of the selected visual artists’ works which belie their serious and rigorous underpinnings,” said Adam Weinberg, the director of the Whitney Museum of American Art who served on Black Rock’s six-person selection committee.

Weinberg was joined on the committee by Tunji Adeniyi-Jones, a figurative painter who was among the inaugural group of Black Rock fellows; Osei Bonsu, Curator of International Art at Tate Modern; Kimberly Drew, a director at Pace Gallery; Larry Ossei-Mensah, a curator and co-founder of ARTNOIR; and Antwaun Sargent, a writer, curator, and director at Gagosian. Together, they chose the new Black Rock cohort from a pool of 1,434 applications—a record number for the young program, which is entering its fourth year.



2023–24 Black Rock Senegal artists (clockwise from left): Timothy Yanick Hunter, Souleye Fall, Samuel Nnorom, and Ousmane Bâ. Photos (clockwise from left): Solana Cain, Jessica Cumberbatch, @godson_elkizzy, and Yuri. Courtesy of Black Rock Senegal.

“I have served for decades on regional, national and international juries for artists prizes and residencies on some of the most prestigious governmental agencies and private foundations,” Weinberg went on. “Never in my life have I seen applications from artists of wider geographical and cultural backgrounds and from as broad a range of media as with the Black Rock Fellowship applications.”



Taylor Dafoe

Only Collect: a craft fair infused with a sense of place and identity

From India to Nigeria, makers at the London event were inspired by indigenous materials and traditions



Collect, held at Somerset House, features textiles, jewellery, furniture, ceramics, metalwork, fibre art and glass from 40 galleries and more than 400 artists © David Parry/PA

As you gaze at your reflection in one of French furniture maker Anton Laborde's marquetry mirrors, you find yourself surrounded by a tropical jungle. Palm fronds appear to dance in the breeze on its wooden frame and the blue ocean stretches out to your left.

Laborde's sculptural furniture and wall panels — on show at London's Collect fair, March 3-5 — draw on the landscapes of a childhood spent in Auroville, India, and other palm-fringed environments such as the Egyptian coast, rendered in woods including Indian amaranth, African padauk and European pear trees.

With names such as Rivages d'Egypte, and Incredible India, each piece is designed to replicate the feeling of a region through its materials, albeit with a European spin. Such windows into places and cultures abound at Collect, the Craft Council's annual fair featuring the work of more than 400 international makers.

"Craft is often deeply connected to a specific place — influenced by regional materials and making traditions," says fair director Isobel Dennis. A walk around the fair at Somerset House will transport you across continents.



Anton Laborde's wood marquetry mirror Rivages d'Egypte

Anton Laborde's wood marquetry mirror Rivages d'Egypte In Laborde's case, it's through the lens of childhood nostalgia. For others, the story is more firmly linked to the maker's own cultural identity. The Nigerian artist Samuel Nnorom creates his colourful wall hangings from recycled Ankara wax cloth — a cotton first manufactured in the Netherlands for the Indonesian market but now synonymous with west Africa.

"I wanted to work with a material that represents me, my people, my culture in different ways," says the Nsukka-based artist. "Ankara is an important material worn for celebrations and funerals."



(Left) Samuel Nnorom's 'Obianuju' wall hanging made from Ankara wax cloth © Courtesy Galerie REVEL and the artist. (Right) Samuel Nnorom: 'Different regions and tribes in Nigeria have their own languages, which is echoed in their crafts'

He stuffs, stitches and weaves the textile into intricate constellations of bubbles, a riff on the social and economic bubbles that shape our lives. The types of stitches used, such as in Obianuju (2022), reference the weaving style of Akwete cloth — made in Akwete, in the south-east of Nigeria. "Different regions and tribes in Nigeria have their own language, which is echoed in their crafts," he says.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Both Laborde and Nnorom are represented by Bordeaux-based Galerie Revel, a newcomer to Collect. “Our artists push the possibilities of their materials, using them to tell stories and address sociopolitical issues in the global south,” says Prince Malik Jewiti, who opened the gallery in 2022 with co-founder Jordan Geloto. “We want to encourage conversations between this region and the rest of the world.”



Ripe by Kampala-based Sanaa Gateja, who uses old newspapers and magazines to create beads, which are hand-tinted with vegetable dyes then stitched on to barkcloth

Nnorom is one of a strong cohort of makers from Africa and its diaspora at this year’s Collect. London-based 50 Golborne returns to the fair, bringing the work of makers from Senegal and Uganda. “Artists in Africa have long used the materials available around them as a way to talk about their culture and differentiate their work from the oil-painting tradition in European art,” says the gallery’s founder Pascale Revert.

Many artists are doing this with recycled materials. Kampala-based Sanaa Gateja uses old newspapers and magazines to create beads, which are hand-tinted with vegetable dyes then stitched on to barkcloth — an ancient material made from an east African ficus tree. Works such as Ripe and Ready, depicting a tree in bloom, evoke natural landscapes and artefacts from the region.

Now that Covid-19 travel restrictions have eased, galleries from Asia are returning to the Collect fair, including the Beijing newcomer BR Gallery, founded by Sally Li in 2018, with a focus on metalwork.



Banquet (aluminium, tin, polycarbonate) by Yu Zhang, from Beijing ‘s BR Gallery

Her passion for craft stems from her childhood in Yunnan Province. “My father was a mythologist and he studied the different myths, religions and cultures of the ethnic minorities, often taking me on trips to their villages,” she says. “Seeing different metalwork traditions sparked my interest.” Her artist Yu Zhang highlights the dying traditions of the Dai people of Yunnan Province and uses them in contemporary styles. For his series of vessels, Banquet, he takes cues from the gold architectural ornamentation of the region but renders it in black aluminium, tin and polycarbonate to sharpen its silhouette. Lacquer, made from the sap of trees indigenous to south-east Asia, is another medium inherently connected to a region. Hong Kong lacquer specialist The Gallery by SOIL is displaying a tea caddy by Gan Erke, who also has pieces in the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Erke has spent years recreating the techniques for “rhinoceros skin lacquer” that were lost in the 20th century.



Gan Erke, who uses lacquer from the sap of trees in south-east Asia

With the help of historical records, objects borrowed from collectors and a process of trial and error, the resulting dappled effect uses colourful mineral powders. Erke has added a few tricks of his own, inlaying gold, silver and semi-precious stones to add an ethereal glow.

“His work has breathed artistic life into the Huizhou lacquer tradition,” says gallery director Susanna Pang.

As Collect consultant Daniella Wells puts it: “There’s so much you can learn about the world through the handmade.”



3 galleries that dazzled at London's 2023 Collect Fair

PETER MARTIN · MARCH 6, 2023 · 6 MIN READ

The world's leading international fair for contemporary craft and design returned to London's Somerset House last week for its 19th edition.

Collect inhabits a singular space in the art and design world. One of the few international fairs to focus almost exclusively on contemporary objects, it remains intimate in feel, yet wears its global stature with ease. A creation of the charitable Crafts Council, the fair puts artists' welfare front and centre, yet is savvy to the draw the museum-quality pieces exert on a global interior design community snapping up work for their landmark projects.

Fair director Isobel Dennis tells us: "Collect has reinforced its pivotal position as the authority for contemporary craft and design," adding: "The increasingly diverse range of galleries and artistic voices featured at this year's fair will make the show richer in content and discovery than ever before."



Cecilia Charlton presented by Candida Stevens Gallery at Collect 2023 (Photo: David Parry/PA Media)

That range comes from countries including South Korea, Lebanon and China; and themes threaded through the fair include the work of the African diaspora, K Culture, cross-cultural fertilisation and non-traditional materials.

There's a buoyancy about Collect this year – an anticipatory quality shared by exhibitors and attendees. And while every stand was carefully curated and had its strengths, here are three galleries that particularly caught our eye:

Galerie Revel



Growth Amidst Storm by Samuel Nnorom was a star turn at France's Galerie Revel at Collect Fair 2023

It was impossible to walk past Galerie Revel without being mesmerised by two large installations by Samuel Nnorom, particularly *Growth Amidst Storm* in African wax-print fabric – a wall-hung composition alive with movement, colour, texture and detail.

The gallery's Anais Auger-Mathurin described to *Effect* how the bubbles in the piece are a metaphor for the closed social structures in which our daily lives are wrapped in – closed, yet interconnected, weaved together in a single fabric. It's the Nigerian artist's first-ever showing in London, and the pieces were created especially for this year's Collect.

Galerie Revel's booth offered up further treasures, among them a pair of extraordinary vases by French artist Siquo: *Vase Ukaluu en été*; and its counterpart, *Vase Ukaluu en hiver*. Crafted from porcelain, the fur-like texture is alive with movement.



Notable exhibits by Galerie Revel at Collect Fair included L: *été* and *Vase Ukaluu en hiver* by Siquo; and R: Space Monkeys by Kartini Thomas

Art market Preview

Five artists to look out for at London's Collect contemporary craft fair

The annual event showcases makers working in jewellery and ceramics, textiles and glass

Anny Shaw

2 March 2023



Hyesook Choi's *A Relic from the Early 21st Century_Purse 9* (2022)
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sklo. Photo Myoung Yongin

The pandemic, spiralling exhibiting costs and Brexit have posed problems for the most established of art fairs over the past few years, but 2023 sees renewed participation and eagerness for Collect, the international fair for contemporary craft and design, which returns to Somerset House this weekend (3-5 March) for its 19th edition, with 40 galleries presenting works by more than 400 makers.

Last year, the fair welcomed more than 9,000 visitors, despite the lingering effects of the pandemic. This year, visitor figures are expected to far exceed that. Director Isobel Dennis notes how the fair is “welcoming all our internationals back”—both in terms of

exhibitors and collectors. “There’s a real richness back in the building. And we are pretty much back up to pre-pandemic gallery numbers,” she adds, noting how a number of participants are returning from South Korea and other parts of East Asia.

Expect a rich diversity of materials, from jewellery to ceramics as well as textiles and glass—markets which have seen considerable growth in recent years.

Here we pick five artists to look out for at the fair this year:

Hyesook Choi, Gallery Sklo

Creating luxury items such as Chanel handbags out of the fragile medium of glass, the Korean artist Hyesook Choi addresses concepts of modern beauty and the effects these social pressures have on young women. As she puts it: “Women have turned to materialistic goods, especially purses and high heels, to satisfy the artificial ideal of beauty. It has resulted in women becoming more obsessed with the way they look [...] leading them to spend more time and money to acquire the products for their external beauty in order to enhance their self-esteem and to increase their confidence.” *A Relic from the Early 21st Century Purse 9* (2022) is priced at £5,600 with Gallery Sklo.



Samuel Nnorom's *Growth Amidst Storm* (2022)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie REVEL

Samuel Nnorom, Gallery REVEL

Inspired as a child playing with fabrics and threads in his mother's tailoring workshop, the Nigerian-born artist Samuel Nnorom is known for his huge bubbled works made from colourful Ankara wax fabric, a cloth chiefly found in West Africa. Stitched together, the bubbles are said to represent the fabric of society or social structures—constructs Nnorom intends the viewer to interrogate and dismantle. Much of the materials Nnorom uses are recycled: bits of fabric collected from tailors' workshops or waste foam from furniture shops. *Growth Amidst Storm* (2022) is available for £6,900 from the French Gallery REVEL, which opened in 2021 and collaborates with emerging artists, designers and architects from or living in the Global South.



Alice Kettle *Star Flowers* (2021)

Alice Kettle, Candida Stevens Gallery

Alice Kettle first studied painting at Reading University, but after graduating took evening classes in embroidery before studying fashion and textiles to PhD level. Known for her large-scale works that mix hand stitching with mechanical embroidery, Kettle uses textiles as a way of examining the medium's complex history in relation to gender and homemaking, as well as issues concerning the environment. Kettle is the winner of this year's Brookfield Properties Craft Award, which awards the equivalent of £60,000 to UK-based artists. *Star Flowers* (2021), priced at £26,000 with Candida Stevens Gallery, will now enter the Craft Council's national collection along with two other pieces.



Pengfei Zhu's *Enjoy the Meal* (2022)
Courtesy of the artist and BR Gallery

Pengfei Zhu, BR Gallery

There is a great deal of focus on ceramics when it comes to East Asian practices, but there is a long tradition of metalworking in China—something BR Gallery aims to shine a

spotlight on. Among others, the gallery is showing pieces by Pengfei Zhu, whose practice is purely metal-based and whose works veer between fine art and functional objects that can be worn. *Enjoy the Meal* (2022), for example, is priced at £1,800 for the set. Of her presentation at Collect, Sally Li, the founder and director of BR Gallery, says in a statement: “Our exhibition seeks on the one hand to showcase the long tradition of metalworking in China, while embracing more contemporary interpretations, be they conceptual, a reinterpretation of traditional craft culture or keenly mapping materiality’s agency and relations in today’s rapidly changing society. Above all, we aim to show the unique appeal of metal-based art, [and] elevate this discipline within contemporary visual culture.”



Bruce McLean's *Garden Ware* (2018-22)
Courtesy of 1882 Ltd. Photography A F Wood

Bruce McLean, 1882

The British artist Bruce McLean first began creating his body of work, *Garden Ware*, in 2017 in collaboration with the Stoke-on-Trent pottery and design studio 1882. Originally inspired by the light and forms in his garden in Menorca, each piece is thrown and hand-painted. Trained as a fine artist, McLean soon earned himself a dare-devil reputation for rejecting the views on sculpture of his tutors, who included Anthony Caro. Not long after, when he was just 27, McLean became the youngest artist ever to be offered an exhibition at the Tate Gallery, but opted for a one-day retrospective instead. At Collect, pieces from McLean's *Garden Ware* series start at £3,500.

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BUBBLES OF DELIGHT

Samuel Nnorom's social fabric

Nodules of riotously hued and ornamented fabric are clustered together in a hectic conglomeration of pattern and colour. They resemble a mad vertically suspended fruit bowl, overflowing with strange, multi-coloured apples, oranges and grapes or perhaps aerial views of a Nigerian market or clusters of huts in village compounds. These are the textile works of the young, award winning, Nigerian artist Samuel Nnorom. Born in Nigeria in 1990, his success is in large part down to the making skills of his parents. His father ran a cobbler's where the young Nnorom sketched portraits of customers. At his mother's atelier, he played with the colourful remnants of the textile she used in her tailoring business. "I was inspired by my mum's workshop," he said. I saw some of this material known as Ankara fabric. It is very colourful and has African motifs on it." Ankara is the cotton wax resist cloth used throughout West Africa,

he uses scrap fabric from neighbourhood tailors, supplemented by finds in local markets and used clothes. He doesn't pre-plan his work. "I get involved in my bubbles and then I hear a voice giving me direction," he said. "Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't." His employment of Ankara echoes its use by Yinka Shonibare. "When I got the idea of Ankara I researched its use by other artists, and he is one of my inspirations," Nnorom said. "I keep an eye on what he is doing." He even undertook a residency founded by Shonibare. His assemblage of multiples of waste resonates with the work of El-Anatsui, the Ghanaian artist who works with massed metal bottle caps and taught at Nsukka University where Nnorom received an MFA. "I was influenced by a professor at Nsukka, Eva Obodo, who had been an assistant in El-Anatsui's studio," he said. "We have a culture in Nsukka

To Nnorom, textile denotes a social structure or social organization that weaves humanity into society;

"the fabric of society" or "social fabric."

printed in local designs often in the Netherlands. "The material is important not because it's an African fabric or because it's a fabric concerned with my society but because I see fabric as a structure where everyone is being intertwined," Nnorom said. To Nnorom, textile denotes a social structure or social organization that weaves humanity into society; "the fabric of society" or "social fabric." "My work process is all about cutting, stitching, rolling and sewing," he said. "In my mother's workshop, we had to cut fabrics into pieces, joining them into big forms; however, I tend to use them to make bubbles, to make statements and to talk about conditions." These 'bubbles' are made of remnants of foam, discarded by local upholsterers, and covered in Ankara textiles. His bubble technique suggests a structure that holds or stores something for a period of time. Having completed his degree, Nnorom was questioning his future practice. He happened upon some local rubbish dumps, scattered with pre-loved textiles, this together with the fabric from his mother's workshop provided his new language. Today

coming from Igbo culture that there is 'Unity in Strength and Strength in Numbers,' so many of us use multiples in our work." Nnorom's multiples, fabric-covered foam balls, are methodically stitched together to make convoluted assemblages that refer to the 'Fabric of Society' composed of closed social structures forming the bubbles in which people's daily lives are enclosed. "I am mindful of what a bubble is and aware of what a bubble holds before it is busted, (burst)," he said. "So material and concept are brought together, getting this material from my environment and getting the form, which is a bubble. It's a discourse about humanity at large." The bubbles or stuffed nodules have assumed increasing importance. "I became more interested in my work during and after the pandemic," he said. "I asked myself what kind of bubbles are we being trapped in? My bubbles began to make sense to me. People stay in their own bubbles or comfort zone. I want to connect people back to themselves. There are a lot of bubble conspiracies, a lot of truths that are being concealed." Especially it seems in Nigerian politics. Nnorom freights his

Image right: *Cracks in the Wall*, 2022, African Wax Print Fabric, 132 x 140 x 15 cm.

Images courtesy Galerie REVEL





Image above: *Creation*, 2022, African Wax Print Fabric, 76 x 130 x 20 cm.

use of textile with enormous meaning and responsibility, “It is,” he says, “the material most used by humans showing how a people live. It reveals their culture and history; it affects the environment and speaks of the everyday life of people; it is about humanity and how we can be human.” Nnorom is keen that his work should provoke questions. “My work looks at individual communities and speaks about humanity,” he said. “To me, it’s very important that humanity comes first in every practice. That is why recycling comes into play and how fabric talks about the people who used them. That is where my interest lies. I want people to engage with my work and ask questions. To ask why this, why that? I’m very much excited when people engage with my work. I want my work to make society a better place.” He has been remarkably successful, but his father was not originally impressed. As Nnorom was a star maths student, his father wanted him to be a banker or an economist and refused to pay for his Fine Art university fees at the University of Jos, only relenting when Nnorom won an art prize. He is now keenly proud of his son’s achievements, especially his sojourns in London. The last was for the Royal Over-Seas League and Art House Residency in 2022. “It was a liberation and gave me time to reflect on my practice,” said Nnorom. He is busy developing new ideas. His work is as well constructed on the back as the front but is generally hung against a wall so he is working on suspended clusters of textile, (influenced perhaps

by Yinka Shonibare’s flying sculptures.)

Nnorom recently bought some net used for fishing in a local market and is developing a body of work *Fishers of Men*, where bubbles are stitched in a more open way onto the knots of the netting. Yet another project is based on skin. He cast his own skin in silicone and then created multiples which he coloured, cut up, and re-formed by stitching into strange map-like shapes. He’s fascinated by how skin can be pulled off the body, becoming shapeless, combining this with an interest in Igbo tattoos. He’s also looking at Okirika, second-hand European clothes imported into Nigeria, with resonances of colonialism, history and economic consequences. His mission, for now, is “to engage viewers in self-interrogation, critical thinking and questioning of socio-political structures and the human conditions of what truth and conspiracy connote to our daily lives wrapped in bubbles.” ***
Corinne Julius. See Samuel Nnorom at Gallerie Revel, Collect 3–5 March, Somerset House, London.

ENTERTAINMENT

Nigerian artist Nnorom inspired by African print wax fabrics

Award winner tackles issues of identity

January 06, 2023 at 07:42 am



Patience Bambalele

Journalist



Visual artist Samuel Nnorom posing with his Art for Change Prize award. (Supplied)

Emerging visual artist Samuel Nnorom, who recently bagged an international award, believes he is on the right path in terms of his art.

Nnorom won the Art for Change prize last month for his work titled *After the Pandemic*. He walked away with a £10,000 (about R204,000) cash prize, as well as having his winning artwork displayed at Saatchi Gallery in London.

The Nigerian national, who has been producing sterling work tackling issues of identity using Sankara fabric, has been collecting awards in the past two years. He belongs to a group of young artists who enjoy exploring and pushing boundaries with their art. In 2021, he won SA's Cassirer Welz Award, which qualified him for a 10-week residency programme at Bag Factory Gallery in Fordsburg, Johannesburg.

Speaking to Time Out while in Nigeria, Nnorom said he was excited to bag the first ever global art competition which focuses on breaking down barriers within creativity, diversity, equality and inclusivity. The award gives emerging artists from all over the world an opportunity to compete with their creativity. He was able to wow judges with amazing work looking at the effect of the Covid pandemic.

“For my awards and winnings it is a divine blessing of my effort. The two awards basically mean a lot to me and encourage me to keep working. I am on the right path to contributing to humanity and history. The secret is that I am in God's favour.

“I have persistently practised against all odds by trying out different studio experimentations before I heard an inner conviction to move in the direction of my current studio practice. Therefore, my studio explorations combine conceptual, intellectual and experimental energies, which are carefully delineated into a visual form.”

In his winning piece, Nnorom used fabric as a social structure. He is interested and inspired by African print wax fabrics popularly known as Ankara fabric because of the stories it carries of the people.

“The Ankara fabric represents my community and a larger African community where it is used globally. I became more interested and inspired to use bubbles form during the global pandemic, which seem to me as a structure that encapsulates all our fears, worries, cares, humanity, love, social circles and class, and so on, just to keep safe and hope. So, the bubbles became a language of hope and safety. However, in recent times my work is inspired by the everyday life of people and general human condition.



Samuel Nnorom with his winning work titled After the Pandemic. (Supplied)

“I still want to explore lots of mediums such as performance photography, textile, sculpture, painting, printing and graphics that reflect migration and integration to be solo exhibited at The Art House, Wakefield. Although the element of my bubbles of Ankara fabric remained as my visual voice, I will keep working and keep believing in the direction of the material and process until history is recorded in the right narrative.”

Defining his work in general, Nnorom says: “I am interested in the identity and meaning that fabrics represent, especially the Ankara fabric, which is mostly consumed in [my] local community and West Africa. Fabric suggests to me a social structure or social organisation that weaves humanity into society. In the case of the fabric of society or social fabric, however, it is peculiar to different societies while bubbles suggests a structure that holds or stores something for a period of time.

“My work processes through actions like cutting, rolling, stitching, sewing and installation to engage viewers in self-interrogation, critical thinking and questioning of socio-political structures and the human conditions of what truth and conspiracy connote to our daily lives wrapped in bubbles.”

Nnorom discovered his talent at the age of nine while assisting his father in his shoe workshop. His work is inspired by time spent in his mother’s tailoring workshop as a child, where he first experimented with colourful fabrics, sewing needles and thread.

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