ancêtres (When artists interact with ancestors), a performance event and talk with Pascale Obolo and exhibition curator Alicia Knock, was organized on September 11, 2019.

After visiting the exhibition, one might also question how Mancoba’s retrospective might affect the Centre Pompidou’s collection and its policy about exhibition making in the long term. A simple online search in April 2021 reveals the permanent collection of the Centre Pompidou has twelve works by Sonja Ferlov and only three works by Ernest Mancoba. Most of Mancoba’s works were acquired by the institution in recent years. In the back room of the exhibition, articles, radio conversations, the artist’s camp diary (which I found important and which contains information about his imprisonment from December 1940–February 1941 at Saint Denis Camp during World War II) were bound as a spiral book. Unfortunately, the exhibition did not have a catalogue, even though one had been announced. In contrast, Sonja Ferlov Mancoba’s exhibition was accompanied by a rich and beautifully illustrated catalogue and a documentary film about her (En dansk billednuger i Paris, 1977) that could be bought from the museum shop. Ernest Mancoba’s exhibition had nothing of remembrance to buy and keep after visiting the exhibition.

Nonetheless, Mancoba’s retrospective exhibition is clearly an acceptance of his presence and importance as a European/African/world modernist in an European museum. While it did not take place during his lifetime as he wished, his struggle and his art will be an inspiration to artists coming from other parts of the world who search for acceptance as he did. It is also an opportunity for a wider audience not only to linger on Mancoba’s erasure in art, as is mostly done, but to talk about his artworks, as rightly deserved.

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Exhibition review

Ígwèbúiké: Exhibition of Sculpture in Honour of El Anatsui at 75 Years
reviewed by George C. Odoh and Nneka S. Odoh

For his phenomenal achievements in the contemporary art world, the second decade of the twenty-first century may be considered as the decade of El Anatsui, Africa’s foremost sculptor. The artist’s 2019 touring exhibition, Triumphant Scale, capped an eventful decade of international awards and recognitions for the artist, including the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement (2015), the Lorenzo il Magnifico Lifetime Achievement Award (2017), and Japan’s Praemium Imperiale International Arts Award (2017). Triumphant Scale marked a milestone in Anatsui’s life, as he turned 75 in February 2019. His experiences in the university town ofNsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria, where he has lived and worked for most of his adult life, offer insightful narratives on his life and art. From 1975, when he came to Nigeria from Ghana, till his recent retirement, he taught at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

On February 3, 2019, Ìgwèbúiké: Exhibition of Sculpture in Honour of El Anatsui at 75 Years opened at the outstation of the National Gallery of Art in the coal city state of Enugu, Nigeria. The show, organized by staff of the sculpture section of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, provided a cryptic gaze into stylistic correspondences among artists whose creative sensibilities have been shaped by encounters with El Anatsui. The exhibiting artists, Chijioke Onuora, Eva Obodo, Chiaka Akabuike, Uche Onyishi, Ekene Anikpe, Sabastine Ugwoke, Amuche Ngwu, Livinus Ngwu, and Sunday Odoh, were taught by Anatsui at different times. In what may be considered the manifestations of the long arm of Anatsui’s influence, the show was, in an unaccanny way, a retrospective reading of Anatsui’s stylistic developments, particularly his wood panel experiments of the late 1980s and his found wood installations, which On Their Fateful Journey Nowadays (1995) emphasizes. Stylistic echoes of Anatsui’s breathtaking monumental bottle-top sculpture installations also reverberated loudly in the show.

Although the participating artists projected diverse experimental foci, a uniting force that
bound them together emanated from the Igbo philosophy, a belief system of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria that emphasizes the awesome strength generated when people band together with unity of purpose. As a conceptual framework, Igwe bu iké embodies the coming together of modular objects in a repetitive manner to evoke a forceful presence, a process Ozioma Onuzulike describes "as reaching for the aesthetics of the critical mass."1 From another perspective that is very congruent with the culture of experimentation that frame Nsukka school art, subject of a recent article by Chinedu Ene-Orji,2 this stylistic disposition towards achieving the aesthetics of the critical mass connects to, and also reinforces what Sylvester Ogbechie posits as the "language of sublime awe at the forefront of most significant developments in the Nsukka school art." Ogbechie also points out that the radical aesthetics which the language of sublime awe enabled is for the most part dependent on the "use of indigenous knowledge to interrogate the relationship between local and global spheres of practice."3 The dynamics of this relationship find interpretive contexts in the art of many Nsukka artists.

As visual containers of both indigenous and contemporary cultural sensibilities, El Anatsui’s art reflects the language of sublime awe and so does that of some of the artists featured in this show. Beyond the uli experiment in the Nsukka art school, of which Uche Okeke, Chike Aniakor, Obiora Udechukwu, and Krydz Ikwuemesi are critical actors, Anatsui pioneered a new art style that equally placed indigenous environment and knowledge at the

(clockwise from top left)
1 Livinus Ngwu
Ozone Porosity (2018)
Automobile tyre tubes, jute, tree bark, Periwinkle shells, metal; 480 cm x 330 cm x 290 cm

2 Sabastine Ugwoke
Journey to Nowhere (2018)
Metal; variable dimensions

3 Sabastine Ugwoke
Open Secret (2018)
Used printing plates and aluminum wire; 236 cm x 120 cm x 79 cm

4 Chijioke Onuora
Convergence of Members (2019)
Wood, variable dimensions

All photos: Livinus Ngwu
center of creative investigation. Exploring the potentialities of ideas, materials, and process as correlative sites of artistic production is a key component of this art style. Its formalism derives expressivity from the exploitation of the materiality and metaphoric potency of the chosen material particularly when used as multiples in a repetitive manner. The obvious influence of Anatsui’s art style on the exhibiting artists and, by extension, on other Nsukka artists, goes beyond appropriating the stylistic frameworks expressed above. Anatsui’s achievements and successes in the global cultural arena are undoubtedly proselytizing. His art is equally seen as conforming to, and also approximating a global aesthetics that offer persuasive pathways to artistic relevance and visibility. The works on display clearly suggested that the artists were paying critical attention to Anatsui’s unconventional way of thinking and were also very familiar with his experimental studio processes and art productions.

Mounted in front of the exhibition venue and standing over 14 feet tall (way above the exhibition venue’s interior height), Livinus Ngwu’s Ozone Porosity (Fig. 1) underlined the diverse artistic dialects with which the artists featured in the exhibition engaged the aesthetics of the critical mass as much as it also pointed out the shortcomings of the exhibition venue. Experimentally, its modest interior space was quite restrictive and denied viewers effectual space to interact with some of the installations. Again, inadequate wall space and absence of controlled lighting affected the show’s presentational impact and ambience. Although space challenges informed the decision to mount Ozone Porosity in the open, contextually, placing it outside enabled direct conversation between its formalism and the environment which is the subject of its thematization. In its interrogation of one of the critical causes of climate change, the towering conical architecture of Ozone Porosity pierced the atmosphere in an act of protest and lamentation. Ngwu created a fabriclike garment using strips of discarded automobile tire tubes fastened together with copper wire. This material was draped around a conical metal framework housing a globelike structure covered with tree bark and periwinkle shells. The see-through nature of the fabriclike garment was used as metaphor for depleted ozone layer.

El Anatsui’s influence as embodied in the Igwê bí iké concept was clearly perceivable in most of the works featured in the exhibition. Sabastine Ugwoke’s Journey to Nowhere and Open Secret (Figs. 2–3) evoked memories of Anatsui’s On Their Fateful Journey Nowhere and bottle-top sculpture installations respectively. Journey to Nowhere comprised numerous bicycle riders executed with metal scraps and other oddities. Rendered in various sizes and depicted in suspended states of diverse movements and body language, this pack of cyclists dramatized the rat race of today’s societies. Contexts of individualism and collectivism were thrust into the viewer’s consciousness in a comical way that narrated existential experiences. Open Secret, on the other hand, expanded the stylistic trajectories of the Igwê bí iké spirit through the use of folded and belted strips of printing plates to create a shimmering landscape of human consciousness.

Chijioke Onuora’s Convergence of Members
Another work by the artist, *Oracle in Reverse* (Fig. 8) explored the materiality of charcoal as an expressive and evocative medium and further illustrates the radical aesthetics of the language of sublime awe.

Beyond paying tribute to El Anatsui, who attended the show’s opening, the exhibition provided critical ground for engaging researchable anxieties that frame debates on the role and place of appropriation and influence in the making of art and artists. Considering that the show contained a rich trove of information on the current stylistic trajectory of Nsukka School art, staging the exhibition in Lagos, Nigeria’s art capital, would have exposed the works and the participating artists to a wider audience. Sadly, *Igwebiike* flew under the radar and with it, a robust understanding and appreciation of the radical aesthetics that have come to be synonymous with Nsukka school art.

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**Notes**

1. In his introductory text to the *Igwebiike* exhibition catalogue, Ozioma Onuzulike (2019) used the term “aesthetics of the critical mass” to describe how the artists featured in the show assembled individual pieces of materials that were similar yet varied in form, color, and texture in ways that initiate a chain of aesthetic experience in viewers.

2. Chinedu Ene-Orji (2019) critically engages the *all* experiment and its stylistic manifestations in the drawing culture of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

3. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie (2009) uses the term “language of sublime awe” and “radical aesthetics” as stylistic markers of Nsukka School art. The aesthetic regime of this style reflects dialogic encounters between indigenous knowledge and local/global sites of artistic production.

4. Ozioma Onuzulike (2019) draws this inference based on Eva Obodo’s studio processes and creative sensibility.

**References cited**


**book review**

*Déborder la Négritude: Arts, politique et société à Dakar*

edited by Mamadou Diouf and Maureen Murphy

*Dijon: Les presse du reel, 2020. 250 pp., 46 color ill., 13 b&w ill. €24, paper*

reviewed by Susan Kart

*Déborder la Négritude* is a tremendously welcome anthology on twentieth century Senegalese art. It introduces French audiences to research by several Anglophone scholars, whose work appears in dialogue with European and Senegalese scholars. The book further presents several significant Senegalese artists in their own words through interviews conducted with them between the years of 2003 and 2019. Presented in French with several essays translated from the English by Zoe Jourdain, this book presents Senegalese, French, and North American viewpoints on Senegalese post-colonial art in equitable dialogue. The book traces key movements from the 1960s through their interpretation by artists of subsequent generations, making a strong contribution to scholarship of Senegalese art by dismantling stereotypes associated with the well-studied Ecole de Dakar artists and the first generation of teachers/scholars at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts du Senegal. It further presents the important work being done by subsequent generations of artists working from the 1990s through today as part of a sustained discussion of art (and politics) from the 1960s to the present.

*Déborder la Négritude* emerges from an international symposium “Dakar: scènes, acteurs et décors artistiques. Reconfigurations locales et globales?” held at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art (INHA) from April 27–28, 2017. Mamadou Diouf and Maureen Murphy were the co-organizers of the conference, and the chapters in their current anthology arise from the papers read at this symposium and the artists interviewed during the proceedings. The goal of the symposium at the time was to situate the work of contemporary Senegalese artists into the history of modern art making in Senegal. Beginning with the influence of...