Yoruba Art and Culture

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by Kamal Adisa

Author's Note:
An Essay by Vincent Garcia

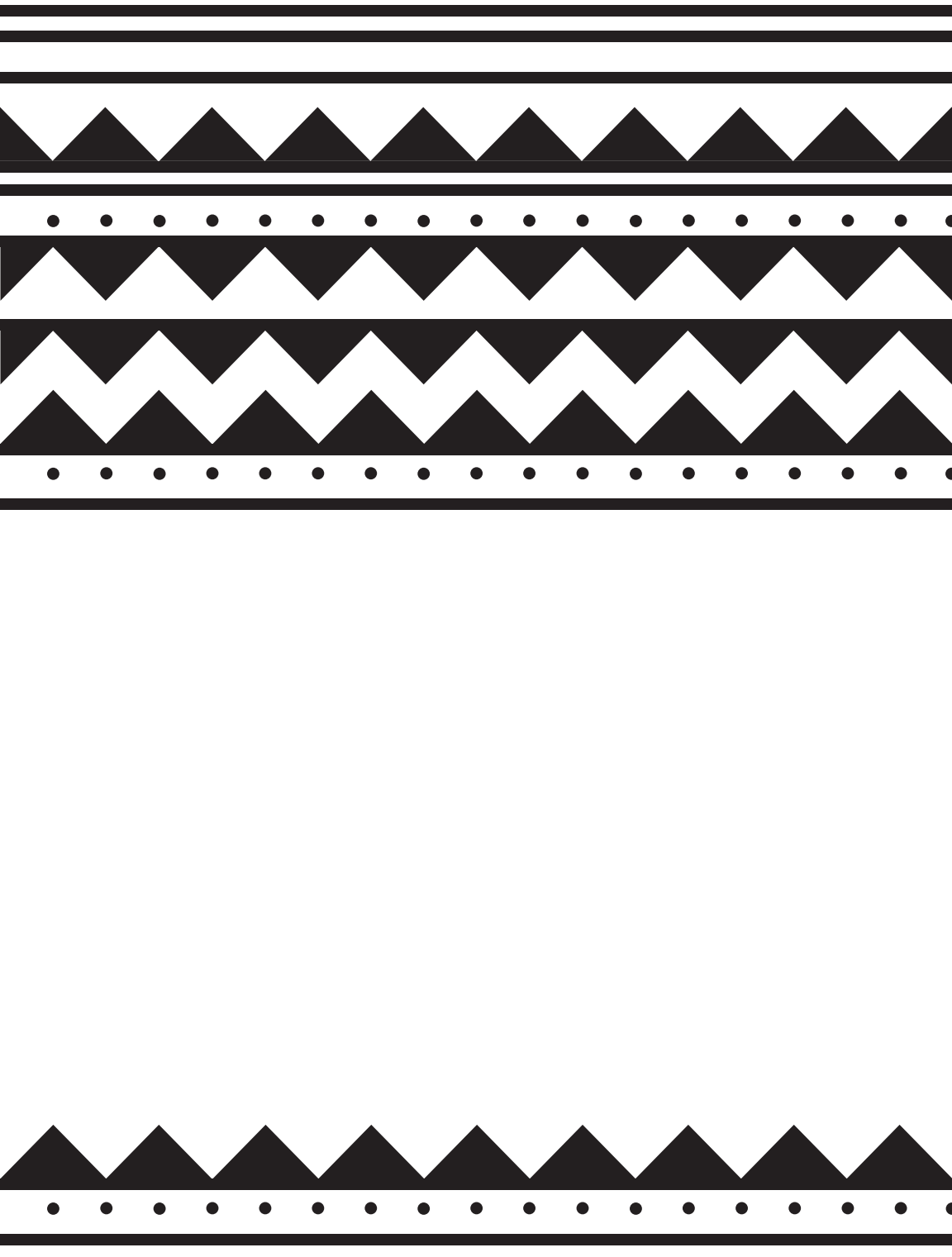
African art is often thought of and represented as stylistic, and expressive. However,some of the most detailed and naturalistic sculptures have emanated from the African region of Yoruba since the 13 th century. The skill and craftsmanship that was required to make some of the sculptures and carvings is unparalleled, and highly underpraised, in comparison to European art.The Iyoba Queen Mother Pendant Mask from 16 th century Nigeria is an object that epitomizes the meaning and use of art in Yoruba. It shows how the difference in artistic style, from abstraction to naturalism, in an object from ancient Yoruba conveys much about its use and importance to the culture. Yoruba art has a direct correlation with the population's beliefs. We can clearly see this parallel by assessing the development of naturalistic sculptures created for the commemoration of sacred figures and the ruling nobility.

The Queen Mother Pendant Mask, showcased in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, is about ten inches in height, five inches in width, and 3 ¼ inches in depth. The size of the mask seems generally proportionate to the average human face. It dates back to the 16th century Nigerian court of Benin, which is a part of the greater Yoruba. The ivory pendant mask is yellow and cracked. However, the condition is exemplary for a fragile mask dating back to 16 th century Africa. Although the surface is now weathered, the face orig-

inally was smooth and seamless. The mask portrays the long vertical face of the Queen Mother, but there are no holes to see through the mask. The pendant mask was used as a medallion most likely attached to the waist, or chest, of the Oba (king). Though the mechanism to attach the mask must have been damaged or lost over time. The mask depicts the mother of the Oba Esigie, who ruled the ancient Benin Kingdom from 1504 to 1550. There are two vertical rectangles engraved on the forehead of Oba's mother, that could either signify scarification marks, or a physical feature of the mother. Along the top and bottom of the mask are a tiara, and collar with intricate carvings of mudfish and bearded Portuguese men. The mudfish are animals that can live both on land, and on water. They symbolize Oba's relationship to both the divine, and humanity. The Portuguese were highly praised and hallowed by the Yoruban people because of their descendance from the sea.

The Yoruban also credited the Portuguese for the prosperity of the Benin Kingdom, as a consequence of the boost of trade and the easier accessibility to luxury items succeeding their arrival. [1]In order to analyze an object from a past civilization one must understand the object within the context of its own culture. It is necessary to fathom the meaning of art in Yoruba culture to dissect the reasons behind artistic choice and style.

[1] Alisa LaGamma, Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures (New York: Th Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 28-29.



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A Story of How the Yoruba Kingdoms were Created

Odua became old and blind. He told his sixteen sons to go the ocean to collect salt water to cure his blindness. None of his sons except the youngest, Obokun, brought back saltwater. Odua washed his eyes with the salt water and could once again see. When he opened his eyes he saw that his land and all his crowns except for the one upon his head had been stolen away from him by his sons. Obokun was the only son of his who took nothing from him. He thanked his son by giving him a sword. Obokun then went to Ilesa and became king. Odua's other sons also built large kingdoms. Kings that rule even today are said to be ancestors of these sixteen kings.

Introduction

Sculpture

The Yoruba began creating magnificent sculpture out of terra cotta clay in the 12th through 14th centuries. Bronze figures were made during the 14th and 15th centuries. To create bronze sculptures, artists first made models out of clay. When the clay dried they would put a thin layer of beeswax over the clay and engrave details in the wax.

Pottery

Women are the potters in Yoruba society. They make many different types of pottery including pots for cooking, eating, and storage. Palm oil lamps are also crafted. Unique pots are made in honor of Yoruba deities. Pottery is only made in towns where clay is available. It is sold to neighboring towns that do not have access to clay.

Vigilant Things: On Thieves, Yoruba Anti-Aesthetics, and the Strange Fates of Ordinary Objects In Nigeria

In a Nigerian town called Modákeke, at the junction of Okéèso Street and Ìgborò Street, stood the ruins of a two-story private home that had been gutted by firebombs in early 1999. It was one of many ruins along those streets, fallout from what was then the most recent outbreak of a conflict at the heart of Yorubaland, a clash between different Yoruba ethnic groups that had run hot and cold for a century and a half. On one side of the conflict, literally a stone's throw away, was the town of Ilé-Ife , where Yoruba legend tells us the world began. For many of Ife's citizens, Modákeke was not a town at all, just a district in Ife, established in the 1840s to harbor refugees of a collapsing Oyo empire. Modákeke people generally saw the matter differently: they weren't refugees anymore, and they didn't care to be regarded as tenants on someone else's land. With homeland and identity at stake, the battles, when they happened, were devastating. I hadn't been able to visit the area for months— the fighting put a stop to my work there, sent me off to other places to do research I thought had little to do with this bitter history. Now that I'd returned, just a few weeks after the fires had subsided, the place was all but vacant, and nearly unrecognizable.

I felt as if I were standing in a vacuum. In front of this burnt-out home was stacked a large pile of fresh green branches, apparently collected for firewood. Suspended over the pile was something that had all the earmarks of being an especially dangerous protective object (fig. 0.1), part of a category of objects called ààlè .

It was nothing much to see, but there it was: a small black polyethylene bag filled with something spherical and tied to the end of a stick. I had already seen many ààlè during my time in Nigeria, and knew something about them; they were the focus of my research, and are now the focus of this book.Ààlè are warning signs, meant to protect properties from thieves. In

1 On the history of Modákeke and its longstanding conflict with Ilé-Ife , see Akinlawon (1996); Akintoye (1970); Johnson (1921:230– 33, 452, 475– 78, 497– 98, 505– 7, 521– 60 passim, 646– 48); Olaniyan (1992); and Omosini (1992:176– 80).

their materials they often describe the punishments awaiting those who disregard their warning— for example, an old shoe, battered from constant use, might portend a similar battering for a thief. This ààlè, however, revealed nothing. There were no visible signs by which to gauge the punishment for stealing the branches, and no way to determine the contents of the bag. But something was lurking there, and I wanted to know what it was. A man was inside the building, raking through the rubble with a machete. I called out to him, " ekú ise -o," greetings for your labors. After a few calls, the man responded, " Óóó ," and came forward out of the charred skeletal frame. He was an older man, about sixty, shirtless and covered with ashes. After a round of further greetings, I asked about the mysterious black bag. But something was lurking there, and I wanted to know what it was.

"That?" he said. "It's nothing." "It looks like a type of ààlè," I suggested. He laughed. "It is ààlè," he admitted. "Why do you have ààlè on these green sticks?" I asked. He picked one of the sticks off the pile. "I put these green sticks in the sun so they will dry. I want to use them as firewood. I'll leave them there until my wife comes to pick them, either later in the day or tomorrow. People will pass by during all that time. The ààlè lets people know that the wood belongs to someone, and that no one should try to take the wood, or something will happen."

"What will happen to the person if he takes the wood?" I asked. The man laughed again. "Something bad," he said. "Is there oògùn inside the bag?" Oògùn is a term usually translated as "medicine," and refers to potent ingredients that can cure, harm or even kill. 2 It seemed likely that the protective bag was filled with materials intended to harm thieves.

"Á á!" exclaimed the man, in a tone that for Yoruba people simultaneously expresses delight, surprise, and often a bit of

2 "Medicine" is here used to translate oògùn in much the same way it is used to translate the Greek pharmakon (Derrida 1982:127).

mischief. “I can’t tell you that.” I also laughed this time. “Okay, okay, I see. Thank you, sir.” The two men who had accompanied me into the area— a diviner from Modákeke and a colleague from the local university— walked off down the road, and I stayed to take a few photographs of the ààlè. I asked the man his name. “My name is F. F. Afolábí, and this was my house,” he said, pointing to the crumbling ruin behind him. “I lived in this house for forty years. Everything I ever owned was inside on the night it was burned down. Look at this.” He reached down into the dense pile of rubble and charred wood at his feet and lifted out a thick round metal thing, encrusted with ash. “A disc-brake,” he said. “Brand new. This was brand new when they burned the house down. I was going to put new brakes in my car. Kai! And now there’s nothing. All my clothes were burned in the fire, all my . . . everything, everything, everything. Now I live in an apartment with my wife. I collect firewood because we cannot afford to buy kerosene. But we thank God. God has his plan.”

“You will see joy,” I offered. “Amen,” said Mr. Afolábí. I looked back at the pile of green wood and at the little black sack that hung so ominously above it. “Will that really protect the wood?” I asked. “Is there strong medicine inside it?” Mr. Afolábí laughed again, a friendly, bemused laugh. “No, there’s no medicine inside there. But people pass by and see it, and they don’t know what’s inside. It’s an old something, a traditional something, and they know that, so they don’t touch the wood at all.” “ Èh héeh! ” I exclaimed, “I have heard you very well.” I took another look at the little black plastic bag, which now seemed strange and unsettling. Despite its lack of legible symbols or medicinal contents, the bag was neither mute nor empty, but saturated with a power apparently as effective in its reach as any medicine: the power of “tradition.” For Mr. Afolábí, it took little more than a gesture toward that tradition

[1] On the history of Modákeke and its longstanding conflict with Ilé-Ife , see Akinlawon (1996); Akintoye (1970); Johnson (1921:230– 33, 452, 475– 78, 497– 98, 505– 7, 521– 60 passim, 646– 48); Olaniyan (1992); and Omosini (1992:176– 80).

to restore a sense of order to the world. One object suspended in air, a threat of some unknowable catastrophe, called its viewers to acknowledge the presence of a shared past. What that past might have been, however, was hard to say. In the midst of this ravaged landscape— where, just weeks before, Yoruba people from Ife and Modákeke had been destroying each other's lives and properties— Mr. Afolábí's "traditional something" seemed a very fragile, anxious sort of something. "Please, bàbá," I continued, "do you use any other ààlè like this?" "Other ààlè?" he asked, raising an eyebrow. "Why would I need other ààlè? I have nothing left to protect."

[2] "Medicine" is here used to translate oògùn in much the same way it is used to translate the Greek pharmakon (Derrida 1982:127).

“In Nigeria creativity is the key to productivity & prosperity to develop our country.”

Saminu Kanti

The Big Fela

Polygamist, revolutionary and founder of Afrobeat: Fela Kuti was a protest singer like no other. On the eve of a steries of UK commemorations of the Nigerian star's life, Peter Culshaw recalls his memorable encounters with the Black President who had a liking for Handel.

The plan had been to record a new record - the record that became Band on the Run - at somewhere other than Abbey Road and EMI had offered one of its studios in Rio de Janeiro or Peking. Instead, the former Beatle insisted on the Nigerian capital, picturing himself 'lying on the beach all day doing nothing and recording at night'.

As he drily noted later, 'it didn't turn out quite like that', what with being held up at knife point, the lepers in the streets, the omnipresent military, the corruption and the lack of security. Still, Lagos had its attractions. Chief among these was the chance to check out Fela Ransome-Kuti's band - 'the best band I've ever seen live... When Fela and his band eventually began to play, after a long, crazy build-up, I just couldn't stop weeping with joy. It was a very moving experience.'

Thrilled by his experience, McCartney thought of recording with some of the musicians working with the extraordinary 33-year-old firebrand. When Fela caught wind of the plan he denounced McCartney from the stage of his club and then arrived unannounced at the studio to berate him for 'stealing black man's music'.

As McCartney said at the time: 'We were gonna use African musicians, but when we were told we were about to pinch the music we thought, "Well, up to you, we'll do it ourselves." Fela thought we were stealing black African music, the Lagos sound. So I had to say, "Do us a favour, Fela, we do OK. We're all right as it is. We sell a couple of records here and there."

'I thought my visit would, if anything, help them, because it would draw attention to Lagos and people would say, "Oh, by the way, what's the music down there like?" and I'd say it was unbelievable. It is unbelievable...it's incredible music down there. I think it will come to the fore.'

The incident caused a brief storm in Lagos, and illustrates Fela's fearlessness, his love of controversy and an unerring ability to piss on his own parade. When Motown wanted to set up an African label in the early 1980s, it offered Fela a million-dollar deal. This despite his insistence at the time of recording radio-hostile 60-minute songs, and never playing old material, so that live audiences would never hear his hits.

Rikki Stein, one of his then managers, was hugely excited and flew to Lagos to discuss the deal. Stein says that Fela's response was to contact the spirits via his personal magician, Professor Hindu. The spirits refused to let him sign for another two years and Fela further insisted on only leasing his back catalogue. 'Even then, Motown went along with it. But after two years, in April 1985, the very month that Fela was about to sign, the Motown guy got sacked and the deal was off,' says Stein. 'Maybe the spirits knew something.'

Certainly, Fela Kuti was the ultimate rebel, a spiritualist , pan-African revolutionary and a prodigious dope smoker and polygamist. Harassed, beaten and tortured by the authorities, he was a dancer, a saxophonist and a composer. He called himself 'Abami Edo', the strange one, the weird one. He dropped the Ransome part of his name - asking 'Do I look like an Englishman?' - and changed his surname to Anikulapo ('one who carries death in the pouch'). He also billed himself as the Black President, the Chief of the Shrine. Seven years after his death, the mysteries surrounding him continue to unravel, and a season of events at the Barbican in London this autumn will celebrate his complex legacy as a new generation of musicians discovers his work.

In the 1970s, McCartney wasn't the only superstar to recognise Fela's musical innovations, the way in which he fused high-life and jazz with the rhythms of funk to create 'Afrobeat'. When James Brown toured Nigeria in 1970, bassist William 'Bootsy' Collins recalls, '[Fela] had a club in Lagos, and we came to the club and they were treating us like kings. We were telling them they're the funkiest cats we ever heard in our life. I mean, this is the James Brown band , but we were totally wiped out! That was one trip I wouldn't trade for anything in the world.'

Tony Allen, Fela's drummer and a key architect of Afrobeat, claims that Brown sent his arranger, David Mathews, to check him out. 'He watches the movement of my legs and the movement of my hands, and he starts writing down... They picked a lot from Fela when they came to Nigeria. It's like both of them sort of influenced each other. Fela got influenced in America, James Brown got the influence in Africa.'

Fela's influence spread in all kinds of directions. Gilberto Gil, now the Minister of Culture in Brazil, says that meeting Fela in Lagos changed his life ('I felt like I was a tree replanted and able to flourish'). Brian Eno once told me that he owned more albums by Fela than by any other artist and that he listened to him 'over and over again'. Indeed, his one musical regret was that he never managed to produce a Fela record he had been known to lie awake at night dreaming of what such a record

would sound like. It was another musician, Viv Albertine of the Slits, who first turned me on to Fela in the early Eighties and I too became obsessed with the man, puzzled as to why he wasn't one of the biggest stars in the world.

BORN ON 15 OCTOBER, 1938, OLUFELA Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti was the fourth of five children in a middle-class family. His father, the Reverend Israel Ransome-Kuti, was the first president of the Nigerian Union Of Teachers his mother, Funmilayo, was a political activist and feminist, also known as the first woman in Nigeria to drive a car and as the recipient of a Lenin Peace Prize who travelled to Russia and China and met Chairman Mao. His grandfather, an Anglican pastor, who encouraged Fela from an early age, had been one of the first West Africans to have his music commercially recorded, including a series of hymns in Yoruba for EMI's Zonophone label made on a trip to London in 1925.

In 1958 Fela himself was sent to London - possibly to study medicine, though he enrolled at Trinity College of Music instead. For the next four years, he studied piano, composition and theory, and made a name on the R&B club scene with his jazz and highlife band, Koola Lobitos. In 1961, he married his first wife Remi, with whom he had a son, Femi. According to JK Braimah, a friend at the time, '[He] was a nice guy, a really beautiful guy. But as square as they come. He didn't smoke cigarettes, let alone grass. He was afraid to fuck! We had to take his prick by hand, hold it and put it in for him, I swear!'

In January 1984, when I first met Fela, at the Russell Hotel in Bloomsbury, central London, I asked him which musician he most respected. The answer was unexpected. 'Handel. George Frederick Handel.' I told him my father was a Handel freak and we discussed, amid the dope smoke, Dixit Dominus and the Concerto Grossi.

Thinking about it, I decided a comparison wasn't improbable. In Fela's music there is the same mix of solidity and transcendence, and I thought I could detect echoes of the composer in Fela's organ lines. He told me he thought he was writing 'African classical music'.

'Western music is Bach, Handel and Schubert - it's good music, cleverly done - as a musician I can see that. Classical music gives musicians a kick. But African music gives everyone a kick. Once you get music with a beat, that is African music.

'Jazz was the beginning of rhythm music, which developed into rock and roll. But what the jazz musicians lost because they were so far from their homeland was the

intricate rhythms of African music.'
Can Europeans play African music, I asked? 'I tell you something. When I was in London 20 years ago the white boys couldn't dance, now they dance quite well.'
RETURNING TO LAGOS, FELA WORKED AS A trainee radio producer with Nigerian Broadcasting, and re-formed Koola Lobitos. But it was the band's first trip to the USA in 1969 that saw the sound really change, while Fela began a personal evolution, talking the language of revolution for the first time. Broke, depressed and working as an illegal immigrant now his visa had expired, he met Sandra Smith at one of the band's gigs at New York's Ambassador Hotel. She was a member of the Black Panther Party, the pair became lovers and she turned him on to Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X, persuading him to write 'conscious' lyrics.

Fela's band, now called Africa 70, came into its own back in Lagos - the hits started coming, Fela coined the term 'Afrobeat' and set up a kind of hippie commune in a large house. Upwards of 100 people lived there - the band, roadies and anyone involved with the nightclub Fela set up, originally called the Afro-Spot and then the Shrine. And Fela became a hero of the underclass. A typical swipe at the ruling elite was found on the song 'Gentleman', on which he ridiculed those who wore western fashions in Africa:

'Him put him socks him put him shoes, him put him pants him put him singlet, him put him trouser him put him shirt, him put him tie, him put him coat, him cover over all with him hat him go sweat all over, him go faint right down, him go smell like shit. '

The authorities responded by sending the army to arrest Fela, razing his home almost to the ground. Fela promptly recorded a track titled after the Lagos prison ('Alagbon Close'), spoofing the authorities.

When I walked into Fela's hotel room on that cold January afternoon, the self-styled Black President, The One Who Emanates Greatness, Carries Death In His Quiver and Cannot Be Killed By Human Entity was wearing just a pair of red underpants, smoking a cigar-sized spliff and watching a B-movie. The 22-year old Femi was there too along with three wives and Professor Hindu (aka a Ghanaian called Kwaku Addaie).

At a show at London's Town and Country Club that week, the Professor, to the bafflement of a sceptical audience, had cut his own tongue, magicked watches and clothes from nowhere and asked for a volunteer from the audience whose throat he seemed to cut before burying him outside the venue in a grave he had dug earlier. Two days

later 200 people witnessed the volunteer's disinterment he explained that being buried makes people extremely horny and propositioned the music journalist Vivien Goldman, pleading: 'I have money. Plenty money' and waving a hotel key.

'Everything was going against me,' Fela said of Hindu. 'Since I met him four years ago, I've seen so much spiritual light.' Fela said Hindu knows the past and the future, and he used him to talk to his dead mother each night.

I had come to know Fela through records such as 'Algabon Close' and 'Zombie'. You could make a case for 1976's most revolutionary record being not 'Anarchy In The UK' but this second, perfectly conceived slice of pop subversion, with its killer groove sounding like no one else, thunderous brass with wonderful trumpet from Lester Bowie and lyrics in pidgin English attacking the mindlessness of the Nigerian military ('Zombie no go turn unless you tell am to turn/Zombie no go think unless you tell to think...').

Fela's robotic stage moves had been copied by protesters in riots against the government he was banned from Ghana for being 'liable to cause a breach of the peace' and this song provoked an attack on his new commune, named by Fela the Kalakuta ('Rascal') Republic. Indeed, Fela had declared independence from the repressive Nigerian state. On 18 February 1977, more than 1,000 armed soldiers surrounded the compound, set fire to the generator, and brutalised the occupants. Fela alleged he was dragged by his genitals from the main house, beaten, and only escaped death following the intervention of a commanding officer. Many women were raped and the 78-year-old Funmilayo was thrown through a window. She subsequently died.

Fela kept up the polemic, delivering his mother's coffin to the army barracks and writing the song 'Coffin for Head of State' . One of his masterpieces, 'Unknown Soldier', followed an official inquiry that claimed the commune was destroyed by 'an exasperated and unknown soldier'.

According to John Collins, who knew Fela in the 1970s and is the author of Fela: Africa's Musical Warrior , published next month: 'In his songs [Fela] went much further than the usual round-up of protest singers such as Bob Dylan, James Brown or Bob Marley. Fela's songs not only protested against various forms of injustice but often fiercely attacked specific agencies and members of the Nigerian government.' His targets even included the US multinational International Telephones and TeleCommunications, on 'International Thief Thief (ITT)'.

In 1978, Fela had set up an organisation called Movement For The People and said he wanted to run for president but the authorities kept him off the ballot by various legal stratagems. I asked him, when we met, if he thought he could ever be president of Nigeria. 'Spiritually speaking, every human being has a destiny and a duty to perform,' he said. 'No African has ever seen anything like me - they see me sticking to my guns through all the violence.

'In the last military regime I was the only one to speak out against the government and the army. Anything could happen in Nigeria. If they get to the point that everyone trying to rule the place isn't making any headway they might drop their guard and ask, "Fela, do you want to rule us today?"'

So what sort of regime would he run?

'It would be a cultural and spiritual revolution. Every individual would feel like a president - nothing would obstruct people getting what is due to them.'

THE FUMES IN THE ROOM WERE GETTING thick. I was trying not to look at his wives, nor seem that I was deliberately not looking at them. Also in 1978, to mark the anniversary of the pillage of Kalakuta, he married 27 of his dancers simultaneously. Fela claimed this was a traditional Yoruba ceremony, although some priests disputed this, pointing out that no bride prices were paid, and there is a suggestion that some sort of immigration scam was also involved. It was certainly a fabulous publicity stunt, although as DJ Rita Ray, who now runs a Fela-inspired club called Shrine in London, points out, 'Dancers weren't held in high esteem, so his argument was that he was making them respectable. He was wild, but very progressive.'

In our meeting, I asked him about the importance of sex. 'Sex is one of the most important things in life, man. It's Christianity and Islam that have made sex immoral. People should be proud to say, "I had a fantastic fuck last night." When a minister in Britain has an affair he loses his job. If a minister in Africa fucks 400 women no one will even notice him, you know.'

In songs such as 'Lady' and 'Mattress' the impression he gave was that women were inferior. 'I'm not saying that women should not be political leaders,' he said. 'Women can do what they want - but once she's married in Africa she can't do anything against her husband's will. If a woman doesn't like a man she should find another - that's why polygamy is so fantastic... An African man should not do anything called housework or cooking...' But, Fela, cooking can be fun, I persisted. 'I can cook, I had

to as a student in London. But if I have a party and do cooking, people call me a 'Less Man'. I don't see why I should go against the cultural values of my people.'

So what is the gay scene like in Lagos? 'I've seen a few boys behave like sissies, you know. I found they had gone to England and been corrupted. If you are gay in Africa no one must know about it - they will stone you to death, man.'

Fela claimed Aids was a 'white man's disease', but he caught the virus and died from complications on 2 August, 1997, at the age of 58. At the time we met, 12 of his 27 wives remained - he told me he employed a rota system to keep them satisfied - but following a 27-month jail sentence that began later that year (on a trumped up charge of currency smuggling) he divorced them all. 'Marriage brings jealousy and selfishnessness,' he was quoted as saying. His manager, Rikki Stein, maintains 'sex was where his inspiration came from, and considering the number of great albums he made... In the Eighties, on tour, I witnessed fur-wrapped beauties queuing up for their turn....'.

Fela's last song had been called 'C.S.A.S (Condom Scallywag and Scatter)', which described the use of condoms as 'un- African'. To the end, Fela refused to be tested to determine the cause of his weight loss and skin lesions. After much discussion among the family after his death, his brother, Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, publicly disclosed the cause, paradoxically enabling, as one commentator put it, 'Aids awareness in Nigeria to leave the dark ages'. In that sense, Fela's death helped save a lot of lives, although it's impossible to know how many women he himself put in mortal danger by his wilful denial of his disease. Stein says 'one or two women in Fela's entourage became ill, though I don't know whether it had anything to do with Fela. All the rest are still going strong, as I understand it. They say it was Aids. I say that he died of one beating too many. He was a giant of a man, but a man nevertheless.' It might otherwise be observed that it was a wilful contrariness - the same impulse that always animated Fela - that ultimately killed him.

More than a million mourners filled the streets of Lagos. Towards the end of his life, as his energy waned, Fela was less involved with political crusades. Nonetheless, according to Femi Kuti: 'For two days, people didn't do any work in Lagos! This is the first time in the history of Lagos they have not had a complaint of robbery, rape or anything. Because all the robbers, the bad boys, they loved him, you know? Everybody was busy at the funeral.'

One irony is that Fela, if anything, is more popular world-wide than when he was

alive - his music is sampled by producers like Timbaland (on Missy Elliott's 'Watcha Gonna Do'), while Damon Albarn voted 'Zombie' the 'sexiest ever track' in a recent poll. In fact, the Blur singer is now working in Lagos on a project with Tony Allen.

And Femi Kuti carries the family torch with his own band, Positive Force, while another son, Seun - a recent graduate of the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, the 'fame academy' endowed by Paul McCartney - fronts a version of Fela's old group Egypt 80.

I spoke to Seun on the day he was supposed to be at his graduation ceremony, where he would have met Sir Paul. Instead, Seun - who's anti-marriage, and pro-dope, rebellion and black consciousness - leapt on a plane to Lagos. He said he had better things to do.

Fela Kuti's biographer Michael Veal worried that 'Fela's message of African empowerment became increasingly intertwined with dominant racist stereotypes of the African as vulgar, intoxicated, primitive, hypersexualised and indigenous mystic.'

For the 20-year old Seun, his father 'was a gift, an inspiration to Africa there will never be another like him. But things in Nigeria are even worse now, and however hard it is to live up to his legacy, we have to carry on the fight for liberation and consciousness'. Both Positive Force and Egypt 80 will be appearing at the Barbican's Fela Kuti season.

Did Fela ever fail himself? It is not likely that he ever felt that way, he told me he was a fatalist. 'Even death doesn't worry me, man. When my mother died it was because she finished her time on earth. I know that when I die I'll see her again, so how can I fear death?'

'So what is this motherfucking world about? I believe there is a plan.... What I am experiencing today completely vindicates the African religions.... I will do my part... then I'll just go, man. Just go!'

A Nigerian senator :
“If even only 5000 Nigerians started imitating Fela, it would soon be very chaotic here!”

Fela :
“No, it would be a revolution!”

Modern Day Yoruba Art.

Kehinde Wiley

In Conversation with Filmmaker Terence Nance

On the eve of Wiley's latest exhibit, The World Stage: Haiti, on view at Roberts & Tilton through October, the painter talks stick-to-it-ness, supporting his art habit, and bestowing value upon the creative act.

Kehinde Wiley: And what further matters more is there's the educational process of every artist of color in this country—and increasingly in the world—where there's a political expectation pre-assumed, presupposed upon each one of those young artists. And I'm wondering—and I wondered many years ago—whether or not it was ever possible to create work outside of the politicized vacuum. And the answer of course is: No. If I were to paint a bowl of fruit, it would be an African American male painting a bowl of fruit. And there's a certain rubric through which we see that. Every utterance that we make is politicized on some level.

Terence Nance: Are you saying that you think it's impossible for you or impossible [for everyone]?

KW: I think it's impossible for heterosexual white men of the global north to create apolitical work. Ultimately that's not a very interesting place for me, necessarily. In my own work I try to focus a bit more on the poetic and take the political for granted. Almost as though we would arrive there naturally, so how about moving closer towards something a little bit more mysterious or ineffable, something that can't be described in a simple set of absolutes.

TN: I think that's important from a psychological standpoint, for my sanity: to approach things through a kind of poetic, creative instinct where it's about experience—and, as you were saying—default political. There's a weird anxiety around that decision. What you're saying about the sort of assumed political nature of all work is also used as a means to kind of agitating the black artist—or any artist—who is making work where their identity is made explicit. It's a way of saying, "Are you doing it or are you not?"

KW: As an artist yourself, I'm sure you recognize when you're starting to write or to think about your own creative process, you know that there

are conflicting urges, or these clinging desires, that start to emerge, and it's never possible to negotiate them at the same time. The creative process is just as mysterious as the people who create. So why can't we own all of those positions: decadent, self-consuming, and myopic? Much more of an all-encompassing overview of the globe as we see it. All of those ways of seeing can be embraced and so: twinning, coupling, is a constant theme with me. I happen to physically be a twin. I have a twin brother. My name means being second born of twins. This notion of twin images and twin conceptual concerns being embraced, inhabited, and wanted is entirely native for me.

TN: I try on some level to use it as a means of tricking people. Use it to humorous effects. The idea that these two kinds of considerations are being imbued into the creative process. There are a million artist examples of this bait and switching the identity of the artist to imbue the work with a different cultural context—and thus meaning, and thus reception—and the joke of that. I think that's the most fulfilling and that's the most interesting way of engaging for me personally: On some level, how can I make a joke of it? How can I make it funny?

KW: Yes, and there should be some levity to what you do. I mean, why wake up in the morning and go with this every day if there are not celebrations around you?

[Both laugh]

TN: Your twin brother is an artist?

KW: No, no. We actually studied art as kids together but he moved on to study writing and medicine. Now he's in business. You know, two different walks of life, but it's interesting, he was the better artist of the family when we were kids. There's a certain amount of stick-to-it-ness, I think, it's a part of the creative process. You have to either have a passion for something or not. I don't know if it has to do with aptitude.

THE WORLD STAGE: AFRICA, LAGOS ~ DAKAR

The World Stage: Africa, Lagos ~ Dakar, organized by The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, opens this Thursday at Artpace San Antonio. Featuring monumental new paintings by Brooklyn-based artist Kehinde Wiley, the exhibition builds upon Wiley's signature examination of figurative painting, drawing global inspiration from contemporary and postcolonial African art and culture.

The second exhibition in Wiley's ongoing "The World Stage" series, the portraits included in The World Stage: Africa, Lagos ~ Dakar were created from the artist's 2007 travels in Nigeria and Senegal. After establishing a satellite studio in the locations, Wiley steeped himself in local culture, history and art, living in the areas for several months at a time. In each painting, contemporary Nigerian and Senegalese men are depicted in poses based on public sculptures that celebrate the nations' independence from colonial rule. Bold backgrounds patterned on the kaftan—traditional attire worn by West African women—envelop the stately male figures in a forest of colorful, complex designs, fusing the imagery of present-day popular culture with historical public art and indigenous patterns.

Artpace's Hudson (Show)Room, the site of this presentation of The World Stage, features exhibitions organized by Artpace's curatorial staff, as well as select traveling exhibitions that reflect the organization's international scope and mission. In keeping with Artpace's International Artist-in-Residence program, these exhibitions encourage the development of new bodies of work and bring exposure to living artists.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode

The Walther Collection Project Space

The Walther Collection presents Rotimi Fani-Kayode: Nothing to Lose, the first solo exhibition in New York of photographs by the British-Nigerian artist, featuring large-scale color and black-and-white portraits from the late 1980s. Fani-Kayode's images interpret and reveal sexuality across racial and cultural differences, vividly merging his fascination with Yoruba "techniques of ecstasy" and homoerotic self-expression through symbolic gestures, ritualistic poses, and elaborate decoration. The exhibition, on view at The Walther Collection Project Space from March 23 through July 28, 2012, will focus on the influences of exile, religion, sexuality, and death on the artist's last works.

As a Nigerian-born photographer who lived and worked in the U.K., Fani-Kayode was active in the gay political response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and was a leading voice among black British artists in the 1980s. Influenced by his experience as an African exile in Europe and his spiritual heritage—his family were keepers of the shrine of Yoruba deities in Ife, Nigeria—Fani-Kayode staged and photographed performances in his studio in which the black male body served as a means of expressing the boundaries between spiritual and erotic fantasy..

Like his contemporaries Derek Jarman and David Wojnarowicz, Fani-Kayode positioned his photography as a public and political act, even while he broke with the predominant approach of documentary realism practiced by many black and African Diaspora artists. For Fani-Kayode, the imaginative space of the studio allowed him to create new icons whose sexuality and keen sense of mortality offered a vision of the black body outside of common Western perceptions.

"On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality, in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for," Fani-Kayode said. "Such a position gives me the feeling of having very little to lose."

Yusuf Grillo

A bio of the Nigerian artist Yusuf Grillo

Yusuf Grillo is one of Nigeria's most renowned painters; he is someone that most art lovers, including Tunde Folawiyo, will have heard of. He is famed for the inventiveness of his work, as well as his preference for the colour blue, which features heavily in almost all of his paintings. Grillo sources his inspiration from the actions and behaviour of humankind, but is particularly intrigued by Yoruba culture, and much of his artwork tends to merge western and Yoruba art techniques.

Raised in Lagos, Grillo received both a Fine Arts diploma, and a postgraduate education diploma from the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology. In 1966, he moved to England to attend Cambridge University, after which he spent several years travelling around the USA and Germany. He eventually returned home, after he was appointed as the Head of Yaba College's Department of Art and Printing. He retained this role for over 25 years, during which time he continued to paint, exhibit, and serve as the president of the SNA (Society of Nigerian Artists).

Although he has never been the most prolific of painters, the quality of the work which he has produced over the course of his career has led to Grillo being named as one of the most important artists in Nigeria. Grillo himself has acknowledged that it can often take him several months, or in some cases, even several years, to complete a painting. With this being said, he has, over the past few decades, produced a few hundred pieces of art, including not only portraits, but also statues and monuments.

Those who are familiar with his work, such as Tunde Folawiyo, may know that Grillo has expressed an aversion to photo-realism; rather than aiming for lifelike creations, he instead prefers to elongate and stylise the figures. This technique, which produces graceful, elegant human-like forms, makes his work instantly recognisable. His choice of colour tones and his compositional decisions have been praised by many, including Kunle Filani, a well-known art critic. In an essay about this artist, Filani noted that whilst many have attempted to mimic Grillo's style in their own work, none have managed to achieve the same skilful combination of complimentary hues and perfect spatial balance.

Zina Saro-Wiwa

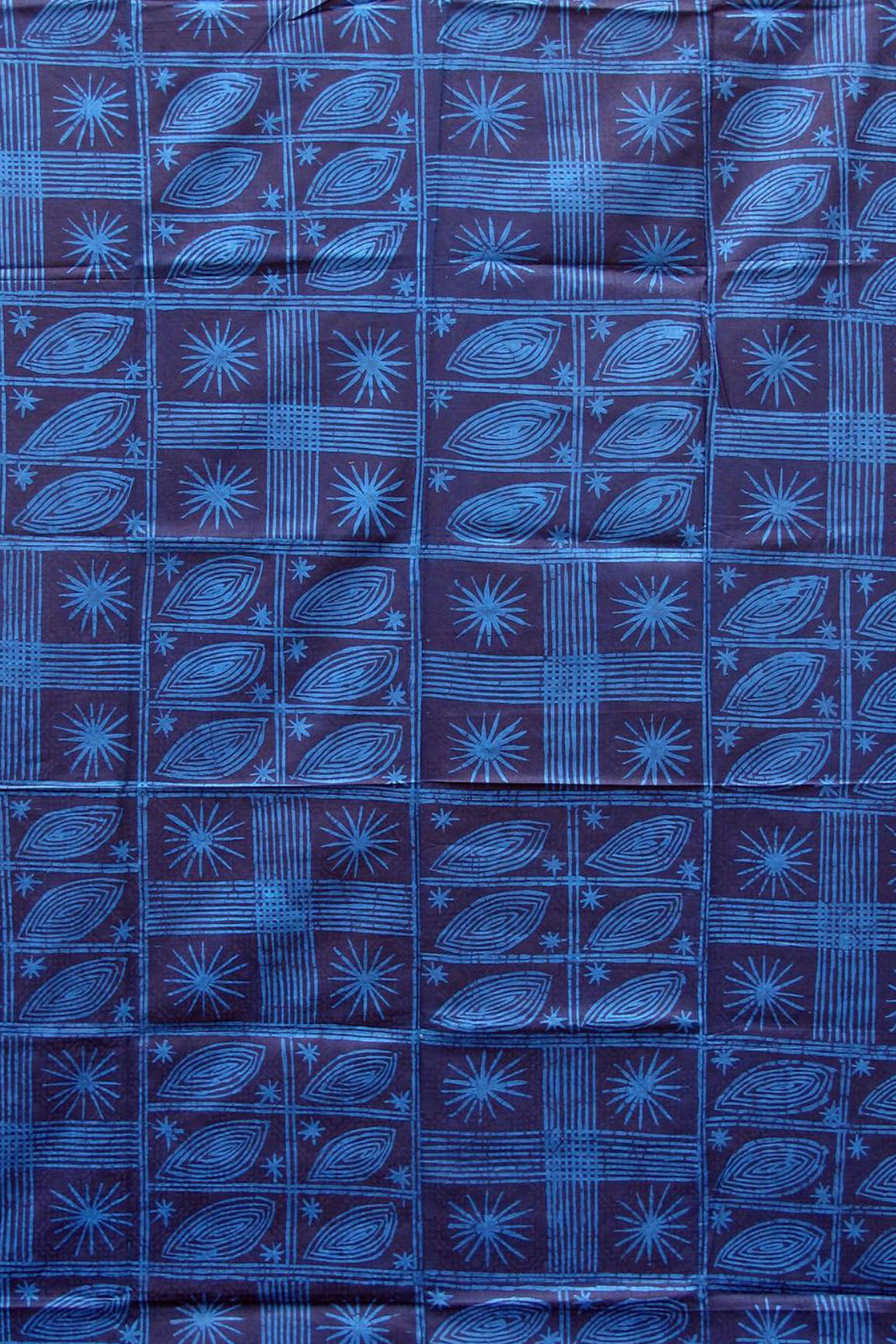
Artist and Curator Zina Saro-Wiwa Is Planning a New Museum for Ogoniland, Nigeria

MoMA is coming to the Niger Delta, and Zina Saro-Wiwa is going to bring it there. But this is not some offshoot of the Manhattan mecca of modern and contemporary art. In this case, MoMA stands for Museum of Mangrove Arts, and it will be a multi-part space, with galleries for local and international art, a restaurant, and a garden. Through this venue, the self-taught, British-Nigerian filmmaker, photographer, cook, and curator will crystallize the remarkable artistic career she embarked upon only in 2010—one that has led to her inclusion in exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum and the Walther Collection Project Space in New York this year, and her upcoming solo show at Illinois's Krannert Art Museum in November.

Her career stems from many sources, among them her ardent conviction that artists are powerful change-makers—and Saro-Wiwa wants to make change. "We can point the way to what's actually there in the world, we can change our value systems, we can create new industries, or the basis for new industries," she says. "That's what art and artists can do. And that's what I'm trying to do in Nigeria. Getting people to think about their environment differently."

The environment Saro-Wiwa refers to is complex and crucial to an understanding of her work—from her plans for MoMA to a five-channel video installation called Karikpo Pipeline (2015), in which male dancers wearing antelope masks perform a playful, acrobatic masquerade on the disused pipelines, wellheads, and other infrastructure of oil extraction nestled into lush but degraded surroundings. Her career took shape in this environment: the Ogoniland region of the Niger River Delta, home of the Ogoni people, of which her family is a part. She was born in its capital city, Port Harcourt, and spent summers there, away from the U.K., where she was raised.

Ogoniland is home to oil-rich plains, which the Royal Dutch Shell oil company capitalized on from 1958 to 1994, pumping its resource without regard for its people and environment. Saro-Wiwa's father, Ken Saro-Wiwa, took on Shell oil and its collaborator, the Nigerian government. In 1990, he founded the internationally recognized Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) to strive nonviolently for civic, economic, and environmental rights for his people. His work led, tragically, to



New Sound

Wizkid

During the summer of 2012, one of the biggest UK chart hits was Oliver Twist, the feelgood pop and Afrobeat mashup that mirrored the lascivious desires of D'Banj, the energetic Nigerian singer then on the roster of Good Music, whose frontman Kanye West had a cameo appearance in the video.

This summer, it's another Nigerian singer, Wizkid, whose name is a fixture all over the charts.

With two songs – the groovy reggaeton hit Daddy Yo and a collaboration with the Canadian rapper Drake on Come Closer – on the Billboard and UK charts alongside Drake's One Dance (the 2016 summer anthem), which he lends his vocals to, and Tinie Tempah's Caribbean-influenced Mamacita, which he elevates with a well-delivered hook, it's officially Wizkid season. All of this has culminated in a staggering seven nominations at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards tonight even as he prepares to join a star-studded cast at the UK Wireless Festival in London this summer.

Ayodeji Ibrahim – Wizkid – began singing at the age of 11 in the church choir. A few years later, he formed a boy band, SI, while running errands in the studio where musicians 2face Idibia and Jazzman Olofin recorded circa 2004.

When his debut album, 2011's Superstar, was released three years after he secured his first record deal, it broke industry records and the

launch was well attended by the cream of the music business. It reinforced what many had suspected from the singles since he was first introduced to the listening public; the innocent-faced kid had a knack for cooing catchy hooks and plastering greatness on guest features.

“From when his very first single was released, he has always had a je ne sais quoi”, says Ayodeji Rotinwa, pop culture writer for ThisDay, one of Nigeria’s most read dailies, and Forbes Africa. “I think he has been smart in branding himself early as a collaborator rather than coming to shake up things on the international scene right away.”

Aided by a solid label and management, Wizkid got into bed with top-notch producers, fellow artists and promoters across Africa and the UK, stacking up collaborations, playing at gigs and morphing into a continental sweetheart.

“Apart from being talented, he’s a charming young man, and whether you admit it or not being charming helps,” says Gbemi Olateru-Olagbeji, from Beat 99.9 FM, a Lagos radio station.

“He started his networking a long time ago. In 2012, Chris Brown came to Lagos for a performance. At some point during the show, Wizkid was on stage with him and even danced with him. A few months later, he was hanging out with Brown in Los Angeles. This was before he released Ojuelegba. He didn’t let that chance meeting end at a few words, a handshake and a selfie. It went beyond that and became a friendship. I’m not saying Brown gave him his big break but he’s definitely part of the story. He continued to meet people, make contacts and the rest is history. Talent is not enough.”

But the turning point was undoubtedly Ojuelegba – a mid tempo ode to the Lagos slum where he grew up – off his second album, Ayo, listed in Rolling Stone’s 15 great albums you didn’t hear in 2014. Nigerian-British rapper Skepta set the ball in motion – then passed it on to Drake – for the heavy-hitting remix that went viral past Africa, Europe and into many households in the US, including that of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys. Neither rifts with his old label nor a thinly veiled head-to-head battle with archrival Davido, in a mirroring of the Cristiano Ronaldo-Lionel Messi phenomenon, have marred his steady rise. Instead, he is the latest bride of music giants Sony Music/RCA.

“He’s always had the drive and thoughts of global recognition,” says rapper Willybang, a childhood friend who previously went by the moniker Silly. The second half of SI, he was namechecked on Ojuelegba (Me and Silly, from Mo’Dogg’s studio, we been hustle to work …). “He was like Brain in Pinky and the Brain, always wanting to take over the world.

“Then it was only older musicians like Brenda Fassie and Miriam Makeba were recognised outside Africa, except for people like 2face, who was young and inspired us. Together we would patiently watch these legends record; it was after three or four years of doing this that we got a chance to record for

the first time," says Willybang.

"At one point, his parents didn't want to see me around his house because they thought I was a bad influence on him, making him hang around studios. We had no money but we had the drive. Even later, at Mo'Dogg studio, we would have to tilt the generator sometimes to completely use the last of the petrol."

These days, Wizkid is the poster boy for a new school of artists fashioning their own sounds from the continent inside out and embarking on a journey into genre obfuscation including Tiwa Savage (signed to Roc Nation) Sony Music's Davido, Mr Eazi, Maleek Berry, Tekno and Burna Boy; Ghana's R2Bees and Sarkodie; Kenyan boy band Sauti Sol; Cassper Nyovest, Nasty C, AKA – all from South Africa – and the DRC's Fally Ipupa. Christened Afrobeats (and disliked by musicheads because of its divergence from Fela Kuti's socially conscious Afrobeat) by the UK-based Ghanaian DJ Abrantee, it is an umbrella for contemporary African sounds that has welcomed influences from house, dancehall, jazz, pop, R&B and highlife.

"I think Wizkid gives other African artists visibility just by being present. He has the world as his audience now," says Rotinwa.

D'Banj's arrival on the global scene led to his split with his longtime collaborator and business partner, the revered producer Don Jazzy, and an eventual flop, which explains why Nigerians are waiting with bated breath for the unfolding trajectory of their next homegrown superstar. Wizkid has only two albums to his credit and no single mixtape – and his new music has been seen on the home front as more Caribbean than Nigerian.
Mr Eazi, one of the artists Wizkid has signed up to his Starboy Entertainment imprint and the continent's breakout star in 2016, is optimistic. "Wizkid is one of the most talented artists ever out of Africa, he is blessed with the melodies, but most of all he works hard. His work rate even pushes me to go harder.

"I believe Sony is taking his project as priority and Wizzy is not leaving his destiny in the hands of others. His ability to blend into whatever genre yet still keep his signature feel might be his strongest suit.

"With someone like Wiz representing Africa, it will invariably lead people to check out other African music – and that's a positive for new acts," adds Eazi.

"Who knows? We might be the next [viral genre] like reggae, especially with a lot of pop stars sampling different elements in our music."

Olagbegi agrees: "The international record labels are paying more attention to African artistes now. They've been sending representatives to Lagos, having meetings and signing deals."

Burna Boy

Meet Burna Boy, The Nigerian Singer Putting Africa First

The Lagos-based star opens up about “Afro-Fusion,” his influences, and the politics of the music industry in his home country.

By the time we get to Burna Boy’s house in Lagos on the night of Halloween, it’s around 11:30 pm and the noise from a nearby generator is buzzing against the soft sound of falling rain. Two armed soldiers follow Burna Boy wherever he goes and, tonight, he’s just getting in from a show in Ikeja, a neighborhood on the other side of the sprawling city. Many of Nigeria’s major pop stars were enlisted to perform at an event sponsored by a telecoms company, but instead of sticking around to mingle with elder statesmen like P-Square, Burna leaves right away.

The 24-year-old, born Damini Ogulu, has built a reputation for himself as somewhat of an outsider in Nigeria’s growing pop economy. Though he has generational music industry ties, Burna Boy likes to do things his own way. He grew up attending high-profile schools in the oil-rich Port Hartcourt and eventually wound up in London for university, but soon bailed on academia and moved back to Nigeria to work on music. Over the past few years, Burna has accumulated a growing fanbase enamored with his style of smoothly blending dancehall, R&B, and Afrobeats, on an arsenal of hits like “Yawa Dey,” “Soke,” and “Follow Me.” He has also frequently collaborated with South African artists like the rapper AKA, choosing to focus on intra-continental alliances rather than looking to Europe and North America for co-signs, as so many of his peers have done in recent years.

Over the course of an hour-long conversation, fueled by a couple of joints and some Hennessy, Burna Boy opened up about his influences, the politics of Nigeria’s music industry, and why American artists need Africa.

How did you get started?

In 2010, [I] got signed to this label that was just starting up called Aristokrat Records. Started dropping singles and then I got quite big in the south side [of Nigeria]. I was like a hood star [laughs]. In 2012, I dropped a song called “Like To Party,” and that just took me all over the world. Started getting endorsements and now I’m good. Dropped one album, sold 50,000 copies on the first day. In Nigeria that’s quite big.

Who are your influences?

Music-wise obviously number one is Fela Kuti. My granddad used to be his manager. My dad used to play reggae and Afrobeats. Every Sunday, we used to have these records, vinyls. And he would just play all of them—Super Cat, Ninja Man, Buju Banton. On his side, I heard a lot of reggae and dancehall. He doesn't even know it but he influenced reggae into me. The first reggae song I heard was in his car. I remember he bought a V Boot—a Mercedes, old school—and it was one of the first cars that could play CDs at the time. The first CD we had was a mix of all different types of dancehall. And then I turned ten years old and this girl I was trying to get with gave me a Joe CD for my birthday, which introduced me to R&B. I'm pretty much a product of my environment.

Would you say your sound is different from other Nigerian artists?

I kind of brought back everything you hear now. I kind of started all this shit, all the dancehall sounds. My genre of music is called Afro-Fusion because I fuse different types of music into a ball. There's dancehall, there's R&B, there's hip-hop, there's Afrobeats—that's all that makes Burna Boy, really. Everything you see right now is really a photocopy of Burna Boy. While it works for some people it doesn't work for others.

How do you see the [Nigerian music] industry as a whole?

It's political, man. To be honest I don't really feel like I'm a part of the industry. I don't get awards because the powers that be don't really like me. I'm not like everyone else, I won't do what everyone else does. They don't like it. Everything is really political and I'm not a very good politician. So I don't really involve myself in all that. I just drop hit songs, and my fanbase keeps increasing.

If you think about it, if I was a part of the industry then I wouldn't have shit today. I would just be one of the songs you hear in the club and then that's it. But right now, you see, I don't have the most Twitter followers or the most Instagram numbers or whatever, but the things that I do, the people with one million followers can't do it. Right now in Nigeria I'm doing shows with 5,000 to 7,000 people almost every weekend. Who does that in Nigeria? How many people can say that? And everyone is singing my songs word-for-word.

My music is a gift. It's perceived as a gift to the people that love and understand it. I don't really speak for myself alone, I speak for a bunch of people. How many people have dropped a song like "Soke," stating the problems that's actually going on in the country, and actually stepping up? And at the same time they're dancing to it in the club but really and truly I'm actually telling you what the fuck is going on—money, no light, wata no dey flow. You get me? Real shit! Who's doing that today?

Everything I know I pretty much learned from Fela. Obviously there will never be another person like that. He used music the way music should be used. Music is spiritual. It's a really spiritual thing. I've actually never picked up a pen and pad to write a song. It comes spiritually. I don't put pen to paper, I just pretty much black out, and you hear what you hear. You're gonna hear things that are coming from deep down, it's not gonna be something that's calculated and trying to appeal to these people or those people. Nah.

What are the obstacles for Nigerian music to enter the U.S. or U.K.?
It still goes back to the thing I been saying. The politics. Africa has more numbers than America. So if we all used our heads and focused on Africa, then we'd be good. You get me? You have some people that pay a couple of hundreds of thousands to feature their songs in America. At the end of the day, I will never do that. As much as we need to put them on our songs, [Americans] need to put us on their songs. Because as much as they think they got the numbers, we got the numbers.

I keep telling people numbers is not Instagram and Twitter. That's media, that's not numbers. You can't hold on to it. In reality, what the real thing is is how many people will sing along to your shit. How many people have you touched their lives with your songs? How many people have been in the hospital close to dead and listened to your songs and got fucking life? How many people can say that?
Is your outlook that you want your fan base to be more in Africa?
I wouldn't say it's just Africa. I feel like my fan base should be people that really understand and love my art as it is. At the end of the day, I can't remember which American artist said it, but only the real music's gonna last. All that other shit is here today, gone tomorrow. And that's the realest shit I ever heard.

You've gone on a lot of tours all over Africa whereas a lot of artists seem to concentrate on getting to London or New York.
And guess what? The London and the New York really don't fuck with them. So why are you trying so hard to do something that you're really not?

The Yoruba people live in southwestern Nigeria and the Benin Republic and Togo. Many Yoruba influences come from interactions among neighboring cultures with the continual flow of people, techniques, technologies, and music. Yoruba popular music sets the tone in the culture. Their music not only sets the precedence for local music but also styles of dancing, televised comedies, dramas, tabloids, sports, gambling, slang, and fashion. Popular music is normally a combination of song and rhythmic coordination of sound and physical movement which originate from traditional rhythm and arrangement of pitches. For instance, the electric guitars found inújú follow the interlocking rhythms as the traditional drumming. Another example is where the "distinctions of pitch and timbre play important roles in determining the meaning of words in jùjú, fújì."1 A performance in júju and fújí will normally have some influence of proverbs and praise names, slang, melodic quotations, and satisfying dance grooves.

The words in Yoruba music are very important. The song texts revolve around competition, fate, sensual enjoyment and the limits of human knowledge in an uncertain universe. The worst criticism a listener can give to a musician "is that he speaks incoherently or does not choose his words to suit the occasion."2

Islam has strongly influenced the Yoruba people and their music is no different. There are three genres that are associated with Muslim people and social context: wáká, sákárá, and ápáíá. Wáká is normally performed by women and it comes from the Hausa people. It is intended for spiritual inspiration of participants in Muslim ceremonies. Sákárá is a genre that is for dancing and praising. It is known for its' oral traditions of the Yoruba origins. The ensembles are normally lead by a praise leader that will sing a melodic line in which the sákárá drummer will play a short ornamented musical line. Ápáíá was originally formed on the gángan talking drum to

entertain women. This style was used as an effort to counter the popularity of sákárá and etike in the 1960's.

Yoruba Highlife is a dance band that originated in the early 1900s. The core instruments are clarinets, trumpets, cornets, baritones, trombones, tubas, and parade drums. The band will normally play foxtrots, waltzes, Latin dances, and arrangements of popular Yoruba highlife. In the 1950s Yoruba highlife was at its peak. Bands played at hotels in all major Yoruba towns. But by the 1960s the júju made the highlife popularity decline and by the mid-1990's highlife became very rare.

Júju is a genre that normally has three musicians and draws its framework from palm-wine guitar music. The rhythms have strong influences of dance drumming style. The melodies are diatonic and the harmonies are normally in parallel thirds. In the 60's júju bands instrumentation changed from one string instrument and two percussion to one stringed to five percussion instruments.

Afrobeat is a style that was influenced by júju and fújí in the late 1960s as a combination of dance-band highlife, jazz, and soul. The popularity spread rapidly and affected major artists like Fela. Throughout the years, the afrobeat genre has remained constant.

Fújí is a Muslim genre that was most popular in the 1990s. The traditional music was performed before dawn during Ramadan by young men associated with neighborhood mosques. The groups normally had a lead singer, chorus, and drummers that would walk through their neighborhood waking up the faithful for their early morning meal.

The music in the Yoruba culture has changed dramatically in the past fifty years. Many genres just became popular in the 60s and have grown ever since.

This publicatiomn was made for a Typography Studio class in Parsons the Newschool of design. The following writtings and pictures were derived from e-flux journals and articles from trusted pages such as the guardian. These articles are all related to the Yoruba culture ranging from fineart to music.

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