

The drive and the potential to grow in Kunle Adeyemi's art

Ayo Assaf, 1990 *Assaf studios New York City*

Art expresses the soul of the people and enhances the energy that drives the community. Contemporary African Artists today are profusely creative, producing works which are continuously sought and collected by many European and African art lovers. The catalyst to this growing interest is the emergence of some outstanding young artists whose imaginative works boldly proclaim a rich and interesting modern Africa. One of the sons of the soil has generated such popular appeal among critics in the Nigerian media that has earned him an invitation to the United States of America.

We at Afram resource, dedicated to promoting relations between Africa and America, are delighted to introduce Kunle Adeyemi, a young Nigerian artist of great vision and skill. To provide availability in this country for his culturally stimulating and uplifting works, Afram is proud to present a collection of lithographs to afford us all a living with a heritage.

Adeyemi's works prompted critical praises from the local media and foreign art connoisseurs for his distinctive approach to the mixed media technique and ingenuity in the use of locally obtainable scrap materials.

Kunle's stylized form of sculptural painting involves working with a combination of complex and simple elements such as sand, cowry shells, pieces of bottle, metal scraps, worn fabrics and most notably beads, all glued - to the canvas with specially selected adhesives. These create a three dimensional and impasto effect thrusting the perspectives and liveliness of the scene into the viewer's consciousness. This uniquely fresh method, displaying a mix of the unusual, utilizes vibrant colors and captures the essence of elegant motion. The elaborate bead work in particular, is a personal revival of a dying Nigerian heritage. This meticulous and time consuming technique indicates a patient artist, and confirms his dexterity against the pervading commercialism that threatens the profession.

Adeyemi's works are based on his direct observation of the environment, and a strong concern for the cultural and social upliftment of the people. After living in both the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, and travelling to other West African countries, he weaves his personal experiences of social values, cultural customs, landscapes and economic travails into remarkable pictorial comments. His works capture the wealth and beauty of the culture through

forms and characters which manifest both complex and simple dignity. In the thematic choices of his works, Kunle keeps in touch with society at the grassroots, and specifically aims to leave an artistic record of the Nigerian cultural history.

The dynamic range of cultural expressions of the contemporary African subject Kunle is currently exploring. By experimenting with the use of beads on relief metal foil, he hopes to create the amalgamation and integration of the diverse forces shaping modern Africans. In the words of Robert LaGamma, Counsellor for Public Affairs, Embassy of the USA, Lagos, Kunle Adeyemi is a major talent, one which clearly has the drive and the potential to grow.