



**WHERE GOD AND MORTALS MEET:
NELSON EDEWOR'S ODYSSEY OF RECONTEXTUALIZED
IVRI CORPUS IN A NATION SOILED BY OIL**



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of the Delta State University, Abraka

BY:



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Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

It is a great honour to stand before this audience on the approval of my Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sam Ogheneovo Asagba, to present my inaugural lecture, being the 119th in the series of Inaugural lectures of the Delta State University, Abraka, and 4th in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts. An inaugural lecture, a formal public talk by a scholar on appointment as a Prof., is a significant career milestone. Apart from ushering the Prof. into the upper echelons of senior academics, it is a rare opportunity to showcase the research's scholarly journey, contributions to knowledge, and achievements to the academic community and the public. I appreciate your attendance at this epoch-making event.

Mr Vice Chancellor, Sir, my visual art research trajectory combines two specializations within the field of Visual Art studies: Sculpture and Art History. These engage both the right and left hemispheres of the brain. I therefore stand as a testament to the axiom that "Artists are Born". My grandfather, Pa Stephen Edewor Ogor, according to my father, Rt. Rev. J.F.E. Edewor served the socio-cultural and religious needs of his community through his woodcarvings. My father expressed his artistic prowess as a geographer in Drawings of contours and maps. I grew up being called "artist. Narratives from my parents revealed that, on my return from school on my first day of resumption in primary school at the age of six (6), my writing black slate bore my chalk Drawing of a table. Coincidentally, one of our visiting aunties, seeing the Drawing, exclaimed, "This boy is going to be

an artist. Thus, like the Ven. om of a viper, my artistic inventiveness has been potent from childhood. From that point of consciousness, possibly not knowing what it meant beyond someone who Draws, I developed and groomed my Drawing and painting skills throughout my primary and secondary school days. Thus, I was prepared for a degree programme in Art, having achieved straight eight (8) Credits in one sitting in WAEC, with an A1 grade in Fine Arts.

- My initial plan was to study painting, but an accidental encounter with a hollowed cast sculpture of a burst in Mr. Oriakhi's house (Art teacher, AGGS, Ozoro) in 1987, when I was in Class five (5), sparked my fascination with such technology. So, from my 100 level, everyone knew in school then that I would specialize in sculpture. Dr. Uche Esimike, who was my roommate in Hostel T8 (Ekenwan Campus), will tell the story better, how I turned our room into a sculpture studio. At the 100 level, I had identified Emma Eni (a 400-level dogged sculpture student), who was Associate Prof. H.U.M. Bazunu's mate and my studio mentor. I used to work all night with him in the studio. After him came Mr. Edison Ekweme, a direct-entry student from IMT Enugu. Though my classmate, his OND training at IMT had set him very creatively assertive above all of us. My very close friendship with him further built my creative sensitivity and sensibility. My 400-level special project titled "Ogbu dancer" (Fig. 1) still stands today at the Fine and Applied Arts Department, University of Benin, Benin City, as a testament to my enthusiasm and accomplishment in Three-Dimensional (3D) formalism. My further studio

enquiry during my MFA Programme, under the great Supervision of Mr. E.T. Erimona, while interrogating Art as visual language, evolved a stylistic oeuvre that did set a path for my Professional practice. The sustainability of my art practice as an adult, lies in the acceptance of my Art by my Wife, who has supported me through and through.



Fig. 1, Nelson Edewor, *Ogbu Dancer*; 1993, Mortar, 9 ft. University of Benin, Benin City,

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, my foray into Art history was a result of career necessity in the early 2000s, when the PhD policy was enacted. Before then, MFA was a terminal degree in studio art

scholarship. Nonetheless, those six years (2003-2009) spent pursuing another Master's degree and, eventually, a PhD in Art History, provided a new phase of scholarly experience that has benefited my studio practice through theoretical and critical analyses. My academic father, Prof. Osa Dennis Egonwa, stands tall today as the father of modern Nigerian Studio Art Scholarship.

Over these years of academic exertion in teaching, studying, research, and practice, and in knowing the depth and sacredness of the creative calling of a sculptor, I answered an age-long Divine call into the Holy Orders of Ordained Ministry in the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion. Thus, my present career tripod as Sculptor, Art Historian, and Priest amplifies my worldview that "Art is divine service. This philosophy has roots in Paul Cezanne's (1839-1906) postulation that, "Art is Priesthood... only the pure in heart can see it. Also, Jean Cocteau (1889-1962) corroborates when he said, "Art is not a pastime, but a priesthood. These views have roots in biblical texts. Exodus 31:1-6 records God's divine call upon Bezalel and Oholiab, upon whom He released the power of creativity and artistic inclination. The altar elements of the two Cherubim, the Ark, the Gold, Silver, and Brass plates, and other altar furniture for the worship of God were inspired by God and meticulously and skillfully created as vessels of Veneration under Moses' leadership.

It is therefore on the premise of the divine enablement for Art, of which the artwork is a testament of the deep nexus between divine order and the artist, as can be gleaned from prehistory, that I have

consciously coined the theme for this lecture, "Where God and Mortals Meet: Nelson Edewor's Odyssey of Recontextualized Ivri Corpus in a Nation Soiled by Oil".

Where God and Mortals Meet: the "God", the "Art", and the "Artist"

The phrase "Where God and Mortals Meet" is adapted from Perkins Foss's (2003) "Where Gods and Mortals Meet..." based on his research on anthropological studies of Urhobo traditional arts and customs as elements of divine inspiration. The difference in the two titles is the plural word "S" based on my Christian faith in 'God Almighty', not 'gods' as the source of my artistic inspiration. Edewor (1998) noted that Art connects spiritual and physical realities in the realms of inspiration and matter. This operates in three folds: "God" as intuition and inspiration, "the artist" as society, and the conduit of visualization, and "the artwork" as the outcome of the intercourse between God and the Artist. The artwork, therefore, presents itself as a metaphoric visual language for society's contemplation, being the threshold where "God and Mortals meet".

With this understanding, the actual artwork is not a mere creative work but an agent of a revealed world, condensed into a form that speaks visually of miseries not allotted to ephemeral experience, yet bears deep, encoded meanings that speak volumes to severe, contemplative audiences. In this case, an artwork is not limited to aesthetic, expressive, utilitarian, or historical models of ascription, but, by combining all of them, it stands as a visual text

of a fruitful conversation between the giver (God) and the receiver (Artist) across the two worlds of spirit and human realms.

A Historical Overview of "God and Mortals Meet" in Art Practice

The conversation that births an artwork between the artist and his God has thrived through the ages. Epochs of visual civilizations exist that reveal intricate dialogues between the two realms. **The Altamira (Spain) cave paintings**, depicting the hunting of Bison and other animals by the upper Paleolithic civilization, present an art of human need to triumph over the beastly elements in that early society (Charushi, 2024). The images of the hunted beasts present a belief-led, inspired formalism that man can overcome the beast. Since personal and group aspirations for conquest, and deep-rooted convictions by faith, cannot be assured in a vacuum or in the delible mind, as they can become lost to human memory and the vagaries of life expectancy, the cave paintings became indelible visual messages of assured existentiality and future aspirations. In other words, through divine revelation (inspiration), the formal ascription that the beast can be hunted down becomes the emboldening factor of survival in ancient society.

In ancient Greek and Roman societies, the philosophy of the spirit-human relations through Art is plain. Much of Socrates' philosophies support this view. Philosophy. Institute: 2023 avows "Socrates, through the mouthpiece of Plato, emphasized the concept of divine inspiration as the origin of artistic creation. He

alluded that artists, in their work, were not simply expressing personal emotions or recreating the world as they saw it. Rather, "they were channeling a force beyond themselves—something higher, something divine." In essence, those civilizations believed that the physical realm is an inferior replica of the spiritual realm. This spirit-human connection was well captured in the sculptures of those societies, which featured deities in "Ideal" human form (Tanner, 2001). An array of deities condensed into sculptures includes but not limited to the following: Zeus (God of the sky and thunder, an archetype of the Yoruba Sango), Ven.us, (God of beauty, love and the third planet, Ares (God of war), Alastor (God of Vengeance), Uranus (sky god), Hermes (messenger god), and Eros (God of love) etc. As portals of Veneration and worship, the artworks were products of inspiration (divine essence) that connected the social worldview, aided by the artist's creative ingenuity. In fact, during the renaissance when much of the conceptions had Drifted from pagan to Christian biblical and secular themes, the sculptures and paintings of the major artists of that society such as "David" by Michelangelo, "The Last Supper" and "Mona Lisa" by Leonardo Da Vinci, were not just expressions of royalty, Christian ritual of communion or everyday portrait, but bore the connectedness of the ideological inkling of the socio-religious belief systems upon which that society was founded. In all cases, the artwork served as a "melting point" of the 'God and mortals' conversation, being a visual replica of deep spiritual reflection.

In African society, the context of Art as a portal to "Meet" in the "God and Mortal" trajectory is likely to be more understandable to our senses as Africans. Very different from Western philosophies of a formal relationship between humans and deities, African Art is strongly marked by abstraction. Examples suffice the "Chiwara" dance headdress, "Ancestor" and "Face Mask" of Bambara culture of Mali, "Nimba Mask" of Simo of Baga in Guinea, "Horseman" of Senufo in the Ivory Coast, "Helmet Mask" of BaKete in Botswana, "Carved Bowl" of Ekiti, Yoruba-Nigeria, "Ikenga" of Ibo-Nigeria, and "Ivri" Isoko, Urhobo and Ijaw, etc. Even. the seemingly quasi-naturalism of Ife and Benin (Nigeria) heads, their "significance of proportion" essence places them within abstract formalism.

In traditional societies, these artworks were products of deep, divine inspiration rooted in African ideologies, philosophies, and worldviews, driven by religious standards, while serving as portals for divine veneration. No wonder, in modern society, most Christian and Muslim adherents still erroneously believe that they cannot have contemporary sculptures in their homes, because they see them as carriers of demons and evil spirits. Such negative consciousness in modern society does not promote the evolution of indigenous culture, creativity, and indigenous visual Art. Edewor (2020 in an interview with Ajeluorou, published in the Guardian newspaper, asserted that 'the demon ascribable to dwelling in the artwork really resides in the heart of the contemplating individual'. I once invited a Christian minister to my house for prayers. In the heat of the prayers, I observed that

he was repeatedly shouting "Come out, Come out". On opening my eyes, I saw that he was furiously, with profuse sweat, facing one of my sculptures and commanding the demons to come out. I taped him and said, "MOG, na me do am, e no get spirit".

Another example was given. of a masquerade that was hit by a vehicle. On asking the masquerade what shrine it belonged to, so that they could rush him there for spiritual attention, he cried, "I beg, make una carry me go hospital, na die I wan die so—nothing dey for shrine.

- Mr Vice Chancellor, Sir, an artwork is the product of revelation (inspiration), which captures both physical experiences and spiritual encounters. It is a creative exercise that transcends the measurable values of scientific experimentation, application, and judgment, as it operates in the realms of inexplicable experiences in studio engagements. Most of the time in studio engagement, the art researcher works from the answer to the question, where media encounter diverse techniques and applications to generate form. It is from this ubiquitous contemplation of idealizing, decoding and encoding of spirit-human essence in art formalism, where Art is visual language in social realism, that the 'Ivri Corpus' of traditional Isoko visual iconography which represents a larger visual autography in the Niger Delta, that this lecture is drawn.

It is the fulcrum of my studio and art-historical research trajectory, upon which I have ascended to the professorate.

The Ivri Corpus in Niger Delta Traditional Formalism

Ivri Corpus (cultural images of personal and community veneration as well as masculine prowess) within the Niger was widespread amongst the Isoko, Urhobo and Ijaw traditional societies up till the 1960s. It is almost non-existent in modern society, traceable to the widespread influence of Christianity. The corpus recorded different nomenclatures and formal features within the cultural and linguistic systems of its domain: *Ivri* to the Isoko, *Iphri* to the Urhobo, and *Ifiri* to the Ijaw (Peek: 2002). Figures 2-9, courtesy of fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s by Perkins Foss (2003), Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek (2002), and Edewor (2012), provide ample examples.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6,



Fig. 7,



Fig. 8,



Fig. 9,

- Fig. 2, Iphri, wood, Urhobo, Courtesy, Perkin Foss
- Fig. 3, Ejiri, wood, Ijaw, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek
- Fig. 4, Ejiri, wood, Ijaw, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek
- Fig. 5, Iphri, wood, Urhobo, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek
- Fig. 6, Ivri, wood, Isoko, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek
- Fig. 7, Iphri, wood, Urhobo, Courtesy, Perkin Foss
- Fig. 8, Ivri, wood, Isoko, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek
- Fig. 9, Ivri, wood, Isoko, Martha Anderson and Phillip Peek

The claim of prominence and popularity of the Ivri in the socio-political and religious system of pristine culture can be gleaned from its widespread acceptance among coastal communities of West Africa. Its appearance on the back of 1000 CFA banknotes in Francophone countries of West Africa is a testament (Peek: 2002).

Iconographic and Phenomenological Contexts of Ivri

1. Description and analysis

The Ivri corpus, mostly woodcarvings, can be identified by its two broad architectonic constructs: the anthropomorphic (upper part) and the zoomorphic (lower part). In The **Anthropomorphic part**, human figural abstract forms are presented (single or in groups) within connected compositional frames. As observed, the male figures are adorned with highly stylized headdresses, including top hats and helmets. Further assessment shows that the figurative composition clearly affirms the African tendency toward significance, a formalism in which principal significant forms and parts are distinguished by exaggeration. Furthermore, the principal figure, depending on the composition, may bear a staff or a hand fan in the left hand and a cutlass or a cup in the other hand.

In the **Zoomorphic Part**, the figure replicates an abstracted animal form, with a beastly, baring mouth showing spiky, flannelled, overgrown canines on both sides. The beast's rotund body mass tapers at the backside with a raised tail. What fits as the ears of the beast can also be seen on the head, which is fused with the body mass. The whole mass is balanced on what Foss (2003) refers to as "four outward-flaring legs".

2. Interpretation and Evaluation

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, in the traditional belief system, *Ivri* is identified as a "Phenomenal Construct" that provides a psychological framework for owners to control aggressive impulses. This is clearly readable in the formal irony presented as a composition of human activity atop a raging beast. This is supported by Lyn's (2002) assertion that, "*Ivri* figure in a shrine, re-channels aggression into constructive behaviour". Peek (2002), while supporting its essence in behavioural correspondence as a form of masculine aggression-control system, also ascribes it to personal determination and adamance.

In the traditional society, when a child begins to display negative aggressive traits, the diviner will prescribe that an *Ivri* be carved for the child to restrain aggressive tendencies. In other cases, if it is such traits that present a dull and weak personality, an *Ivri* is also recommended to awaken sensibilities that support masculine fervour. During wartime, the *Igbu* (warriors) present themselves at the community *Ivri* altar to enhance their aggressive prowess needed to win the war. Also, *Ivri* was used as a spiritual messenger for debt recovery. It is within these contraptions, based on the anthropomorphic and zoological parts, that Edewor (1998, 2014) established that the *Ivri* Corpus can be defined as the traditional imagery and construct of psychological and mental health in social chemistry. Thus, "riding aggressive impulses" defines self-awareness and control, communal cohesion and

development, human capital development, and environmental security (Edewor: 2010).

From the above, the interpretation of *Ivri* complex brings to the fore a paradox: peace and prosperity atop a raging beast. It is in the control of aggressive tendencies that humans can attain a healthy mental and physical state, which produces wealth and development. This is also reflected in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which entails peace, justice and strong institutions, because wealth and development can only thrive in the midst of social justice (Edewor, 2021).

Ivri Corpus in Nelson Edewor's Studio Research: A Conceptual Background

Drawing on the iconographic and phenomenological deductions above, interrogation on the premise of aggression for which the "Priest Sculptor" conceptualized the iconic *Ivri* Corpus as psycho therapeutic remedy in traditional Niger Delta society is inevitable. In that context, however, the inevitable question remains: are there modern aggression-prompting actions in today's Niger Delta? If there are, what formal contraptions can suitably express the social malaise, as a visual register of modern Niger Delta formal history, especially in the era of oil exploitation, which is the dominant agent of anthropogenic and environmental affliction? (Edewor, 2023).

The odyssey of my research trajectory (Studio and Theoretical) have substantially interrogated these concerns in Edewor: (1998,

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 a, b, c, 2002a and b, 2003 a and b, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009a, b, c, 2010a, b, c, d, e, 2011a, b, 2012a, b, c, 2013a, b, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2024). Also, dissertations, theses, and articles by Onibere (2006), Bazunu (2006, 2012, 2022, 2025), Onekpe (2021), and Ophori (2024) have provided other perspectives on the discourse.

The Environmental and Economic Causations of Aggression in Traditional Ivri Society

The question of the possible cause of aggression in traditional society in the Niger Delta brings to the fore environmental considerations. The Niger Delta environment Fig. 9b, where *Ivri* corpus exerted its prominence in traditional society, is one of the most delicate ecological regions in Nigeria.

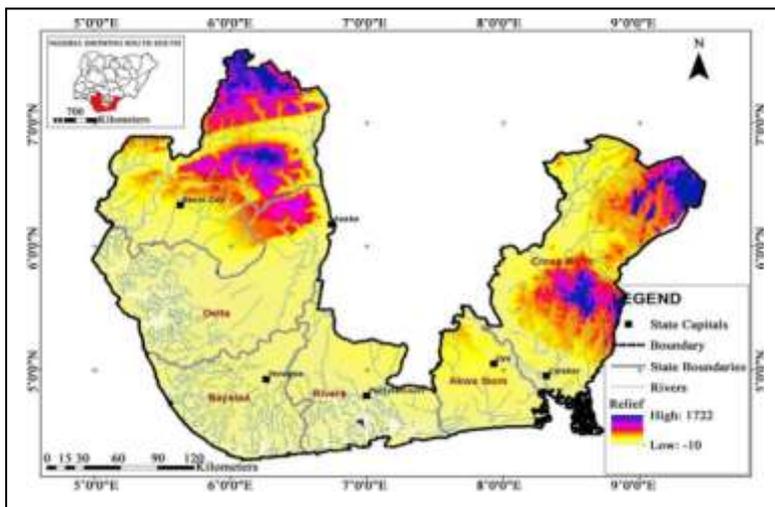


Fig. 9b. Map of the Niger Delta showing its relief distribution.

https://tse2.mm.bing.net/th/id/OIP.cos9ThN_6xmF0dDc0BuKSQHaFO?rs=1&pid=ImgDetMain&o=7&rm=3

The environment is mainly on the low-relief topography of -10. This is the determinant of economic activities such as seasonal farming, hunting, and fishing. These economic activities were, however, impacted by limited arable land throughout the year due to extensive water tributaries, extensive swamp systems, and perennial flooding that temporarily displaced communities at times. Also, deadly beasts, poor health conditions, and a high mortality rate exacerbated the harsh living conditions of local communities (Kuenzer:2014, Izah, 2023). Cases persist in modern society, including land and fishing lake ownership disputes, leading to incessant communal clashes. No doubt, in conditions of personal and community loss of stable economic

activities, and accentuated harsh living conditions, negative responses that accelerate aggressive impulses are bound to be elevated. Edewor (2021), while alluding to SDG Goal 2 on the need to eradicate hunger and adopt sustainable practices to achieve the goal, Afinotan and Ojakorotu (2009) expound on the human impact of relating to loss, when he wrote;

...when there is a gap between the level of value expectation and the level of value attainment, due to a lack of capability to establish a congruence between both levels, tension builds up due to the pressure of an unfulfilled aspiration, an unsatisfied urge or a need. This, when not arrested in time, leads to frustration. Frustration, when it builds up, leads to the release of suppressed emotion, which is often directed against the party considered the source of the deprivation of satisfaction. This strong emotion finally finds an outlet through an aggressive and invariably violent disposition towards the environment.

Aggression in Modern Niger Delta: A Nation Soiled by Oil

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, aggressive impulses are widespread in modern Niger Delta. This is premised on the fact that the land has been soiled by oil. It is a stark paradox: land rich in hydrocarbon resources is plagued by profound and pervasive deprivation. This is acutely manifested in the degree to which the region's inhabitants live in abject poverty, while trillions of naira from its resources run the nation's central economy. Research abounds on the federal government's appropriation of oil revenues, yet it has no direct positive impact on oil-producing communities. This has

laid the groundwork for discontent and marginalization (Uche & Uche, 2004). The deep-rooted course of aggression in modern Niger Delta can be traced to environmental, economic, and socio-political conditions.

Environmental degradation stands as a critical and persistent agent of deprivation in the region, as it perpetuates aggressive impulses. Research abounds on the subject; UNEP:2006, 2011, Ordinioha & Brisibe, 2013, Osiecki et al., 2013, Edewor, 2021 and 2023, Jato et al., 2024, and a host of others who attest that the Niger Delta is one of the most polluted oil-producing areas globally through unabated oil spills and extensive gas flaring. **Oil spills**, resulting from operational failures, ageing infrastructure, sabotage, and theft, gravely affect the flora and fauna in the following ways: contaminated soil rendering arable lands infertile, polluted waterways causing poisoning of aquatic life and vital mangrove ecosystems/, and contamination of drinking water sources. In **Gas flaring**, the burning off of associated natural gas releases toxic chemicals (e.g., benzene, toluene, xylene) into the atmosphere, contributing to acid rain, respiratory illnesses, skin lesions, ozone depletion, and climate change, among others. The cumulative effect of these environmental assaults is the marked decline in public health, increased rates of infant mortality, and a diminished quality of life, which effectively traps communities in a vicious cycle of poverty and disease. This environmental devastation is not merely an unfortunate side effect; it is a direct and continuous impulse

driving comprehensive deprivation upon which aggression is inevitable.

Economic deprivation in the Niger Delta is not merely an absence of wealth but an active process of dispossession and the destruction of traditional livelihoods. The shift from an agrarian and fishing-based economy to an oil-dependent one, in which much of the indigenous population is not involved in the process, has enshrined devastating consequences of widespread poverty. Oil exploration and production activities, including seismic surveys, pipeline construction, and facility establishment, have historically led to the expropriation of community lands without adequate compensation, displacing populations and reducing access to fertile farmland (Amah, 2018). Idongisit (2024) appraises it as "Oil of Poverty" to its host community.

The Federal government policy framework further reveals an imbalance in centralized governance structures. How can the "Goose that lays the Golden Egg" not be courted with entreaties that support its continued service? The highly centralized nature of Nigeria's oil economy and its fiscal federalism have historically ensured that oil-producing communities and states have limited control over the resources extracted from their lands (Hassan & Ari, 2023). A "13% derivation fund" is a gross abuse of the region's contribution to national existence. Decisions regarding oil exploration, production, and revenue allocation are primarily made at the federal level, often without meaningful consultation or participation from affected communities (Monday et al., 2022). Furthermore, corruption at all levels of

government—federal, state, and local—further exacerbates deprivation. Funds allocated for regional development, environmental remediation, protection and conservation, or social projects often fail to reach their intended beneficiaries but are diverted through corrupt practices (Atakpa & Akpan, 2023).

Corruption in high and low places perpetuates a vicious cycle where promised development projects remain incomplete or poorly executed, while the basic needs of the populace remain unmet (Ebeku, 2020). The lack of accountability and transparency within governance structures empowers a small elite while disempowering the majority, fostering a deep sense of injustice and political alienation among the populace (Vite, 2018). The recent cancellation of 5.56 trillion Naira in NNPC Debt owed to the Federal Government in December 2025 by President Tinubu's administration, without public input, is mind-blowing and has raised concerns about the president's legitimacy to take such actions.

Military responses to legitimate community grievances have historically suppressed people's legitimate agitation. These actions cement a climate of mistrust and deepen impulses of deprivation (Onwuazombe, 2017), where aggression becomes the avenue to ventilate emotional stress.

The aggregate of the above factors has profound socio-cultural consequences, acting as further impulses of aggression. The destruction of traditional livelihoods and the absence of viable alternatives have led to the erosion of community cohesion and

social structures (Peres et al., 2019). High unemployment, particularly among youth, contributes to rising crime rates, Drug abuse, and the breakdown of family units (Ume, 2025). A shared experience of suffering and perceived exploitation by both the state and multinational corporations has fueled various forms of resistance and agitation, ranging from peaceful protests to violent militancy (Obi, 2001).

While militancy initially emerged as a response to deprivation, its prolonged existence became a further source of deprivation, contributing to instability, insecurity, internal displacement, and a breakdown of law and order, which in turn hindered development and perpetuated poverty (Okon et al., 2022). Even with the present TANTITA pipeline security, the agitation over marginalization and the economic favouritism of a cultural group over others has not abated. The cycle of violence, fueled by grievances and the availability of illicit arms, further erodes the social fabric, making effective governance and sustainable development increasingly challenging. The recent Okuama incident is still very fresh in our minds.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, the Niger Delta region has been in a perpetual state of being "soiled by oil" for the past 70 years, since petroleum was first discovered in 1956 at Oloibiri. Responses to the under developing nature of the heinous activities of prospecting and government collaborations have generated responses that leave much to be desired: Isaac Adaka Boro raised the regional emancipation flag in 1966 before the Nigerian civil war, Ogoni declaration was in 1990 which led to the eventual

execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others in 1995, the Kaiama declaration in 1998 by the Ijaw Youth Council and eventual Niger Delta Militant uprisings that lasted for approximately a decade (late 1990s till late 2000s), also the Odi and Okuama military actions of 1999 and 2024 due to security complicity arising from oil conflicts. What about the thousands of peaceful protests at most Oil facilities in the region, that end with state security brutality and recorded deaths at times. Also, what about those who have died while hustling a living legally or illegally out of oil facilities? I will never forget the Jesse incident of 17th October, 1998, which occurred while I was deep in my MFA studio research on the effects of Oil Exploitation in the Niger Delta.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, I crave your indulgence that we rise in a minute's silence for the repose of the souls of our heroes who, in the dire course of agitating for a better and prosperous Niger Delta, paid the ultimate price. May the souls of all the Niger Delta environmental crusaders and militants who died in the struggle rest in peace (Fig. 29). May their sacrificial deaths not be in vain. Amen.

Contextualizing Modern Ivri: The Studio Process

Arising from the context of livid, aggressive impulses in the modern Niger Delta, an attempt to develop a formal register became evident during my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) studies at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, in 1997, under the supervision of Mr. E.T. Erimona. Based on the theoretical

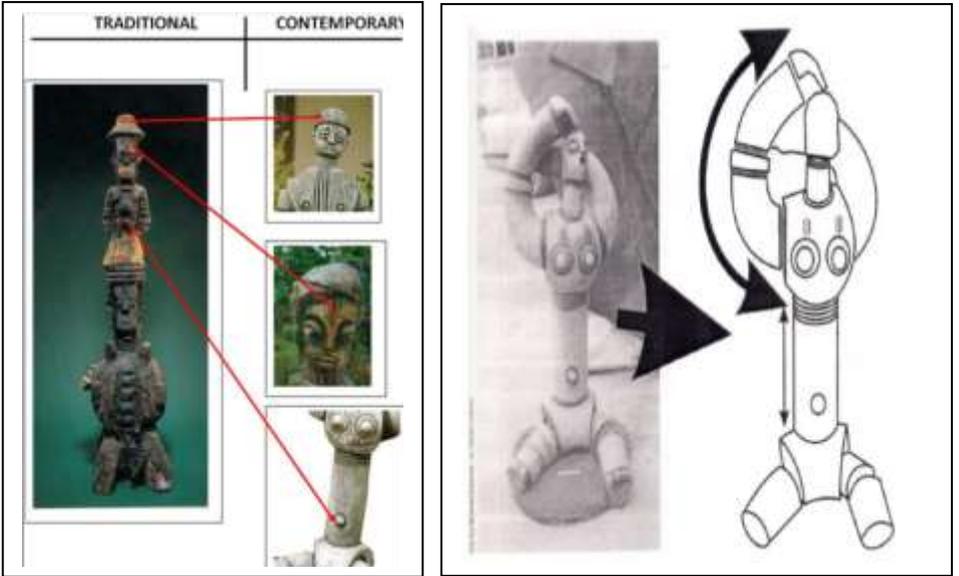
framework of "Social Realism", which advocates conceptualizing reality as a revolutionary development which combines the task of ideological remaking and education (Read:1966), as well as geographic thoughts of environmental possibilism and determinism (Onokerhoraye:1994), where the artist instead of just attempting to create self-sufficient 'pure' work, uses his talents to interpret the phenomenal world. This idea is strengthened by the concept of the sociology of art, as discussed by Hana (1970), which avows that the work of art "can live beyond their time and seem expressive and meaningful in completely different epochs and societies" if society is adequately captured. Through this means, the artist is a socio-political and environmental commentator who relies on the power and strength of divine inspiration.

In concert with traditional Niger Delta society, where Ivri was phenomenal in addressing environmental challenges, and the modern Niger Delta, where oil has soiled the regional scape with its attendant aggressive impulses, Nelson Edewor's studio explorations have developed a new formal approach that succinctly expresses the region today. This is based on a simulation of the Ivri formalism using pipe elements iconic of oil prospecting, refining, and oil product distribution.

Figs 10a, 10b, 11 and 12 present images and analyses associated with the formal synthesis.



Fig.10a and 10b, Petroleum oil installation on a river within human habitation



Figs. 11 and 12. formal analyses of traditional and Contemporary Ivri elements and the pipe relationship in the formalistic engineering of Nelson Edewor Modern Ivri. Courtesy, Onibere (2006).

Arising from these, a new iconic and formal autography that amplifies indigenous identity for interpreting contemporary life in the region was developed. The works generated from the studio process over time have employed media such as drawings on paper, wood (Carving), Morta (Direct modelling), Thixotropic (Casting), Bronze (Casting), and Installation Arts (mixed media).

Nelson Edewor's Formal Odyssey: Expressing the Niger Delta in a Nation Soiled by Oil

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, Nelson Edewor's formal odyssey can be gleaned in the rich portfolio of hundreds of artworks that articulate modern Ivri since 1998 which supports petro-aesthetics. The works have been exhibited in Nigeria, Senegal, Europe, and America. Some of the works also adorn Aso Rock Villa, Abuja, Palace of Muhamed III (King of Morocco), Palace of the Obi of Onitsha, as well as in hundreds of private homes and Galleries. The outcome has also elicited four Solo exhibitions, one joint exhibition, and over 80 group exhibitions, expressing the woes and dreams of the Niger Delta over the past 27 years.

The studio's trajectory can therefore be categorized into the following eleven. (11) expressive types: environmental abuse, economic and human loss, psychological torture, political decay, Social Abuse and Disharmony, Wicked and Evil Tendencies, Revolt and Protest, Controlled Aggression, Social Self-awareness, Social Responsibility and Community Development, and Hope and a Better Tomorrow.

1. Expressions of Environmental Abuse

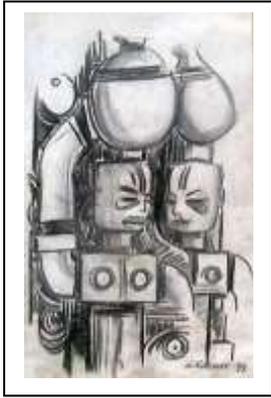


Fig. 13

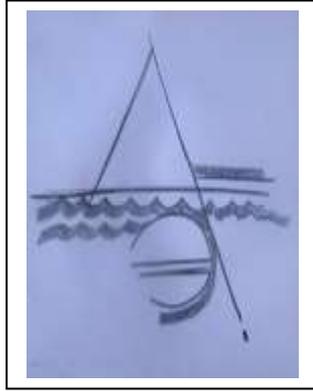


Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

Fig. 13, Nelson Edewor, The Stream is Polluted Again, Charcoal, 52x31cm
1999

Fig.14., Nelson Edewor, On Shore to Off Shore: the Plunder Continues,
Charcoal, 52x31cm, 2004

Fig. 15. Nelson Edewor. "Akpo 'gbome Unu" Bronze, 13cm, 2010

Fig.16, Hunger, Wood, 94cm, 2003

Environmental abuse caused by oil spills and gas flaring is a significant factor in environmental decay, resulting in untold hardship in the region. The works (Figs. 13-16) expressing this unwholesome condition include "The Stream is Polluted Again" (Edewor,1999), "On Shore to Off Shore: the Plunder Continues" (Edewor, 2004), and "Akpo 'gbome Unu" (Edewor, 2010), "Hunger" (Edewor, 2000), express pollution of waterways and farmlands in the environment occasioned by seismic and exploration activities, burst pipes owing to low maintenance culture, pipeline vandalization, etc. The effect is the loss of a clean and healthy environment.

2. Expressions of Economic and Human Loss



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

Fig. 17. Nelson Edewor, Cry the Beloved country, Mortar, 137cm 1998

Fig.18. Nelson Edewor, Death Has Struck my Egg, 163cm, 1998

Fig. 19. Nelson Edewor. Oja Yoooo, Isoko Kweke, Bronze, 72cm

Economic and human loss are existential crises that generate very negative human responses such as deep emotional outpour (cry) and hunger. When put together, human existentiality is placed in a precarious state. The works (Figs. 17-19); “Cry the Beloved Country” (Edewor 1998), Death Has Struck My Egg” (Edewor

1998) and “Oja Yoooo, Isoko Kweke” (2010) express the incidents of November 10th 1995, October 18th 1998, and November 20th 1999. The Execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other eight, the Jesse Fire incident and the sacking of Odi arising from economic deprivation. The pieces are epic and metaphoric of the horrors and injustice that the region has suffered since 1958, when oil was discovered in commercial quantity at Oloibiri. The question is, when will this condition change? When will the region receive the dividends of its rare endowment of wealth? When shall we smile indeed?

3. Expressions of Psychological Torture



Fig. 20.



Fig. 21.



Fig. 22



Fig. 23

Fig. 20, Nelson Edewor, *We Cringe and Stare in Horror*, Charcoal, 1999

Fig.21, Nelson Edewor, *Oh My God: Exasperation*, Wood, 2001

Fig. 22. Nelson Edewor. *We can't See the Monster's Face*, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm, 2003

Fig. 23. Nelson Edewor. *Om̄e Re'No*, Bronze, 25cm, 2010

Psychological torture is caused by an attack on an individual's mental health that inflicts extreme mental suffering, thus reducing an opponent's morale. The activities of multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta have had an untoward psychological torture on host communities who are constantly at the mercy of socio-political and economic policies that promote unhindered exploitation of their environment. The Figs. 20-23, "We Cringe and Stare in Horror" (Edewor 1999), "Ghene' Si'Om̄e" (2001),

“We can’t See the Monster’s Face” (Edewor: 2003), and “Ome Re’No” (Edewor 2010), expresses the horror and scares of the local population, especially women and children, in the heat and escalating conditions of armed conflict between resisting youths who demand better deals in the support of a cleaner environment and economic compensations due to loss of communal livelihood.

From the Adaka Boro’s declaration of the Niger Delta Republic in Feb. 1966, till the Ogoni Bill of Right declaration in 1990, and the eventual execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others by the Abacha’s military regime in 1995, and the arm struggle by the Niger Delta Militant groups, the Odi massacre in November 1999 and recently the Okuama sacking on the 15th of March 2014, communities have been under siege and fear. Also, oil host communities are mostly not in a position or have the privilege to interface with the real oil merchants plundering their wealth. Shell BP is in London, UK; Chevron is in Houston, Texas; Agip is in Jordan; Total Energies is in France; and even. our very own NNPC is in Abuja. None is within reach. Yet the oil continues to flow.

4. Expressions of Political Decay



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

- Fig. 24. Nelson Edewor, My Peoples Blood for Cake, Mortar, 1998
Fig.25, Nelson Edewor, Burden is Our Reward, Mortar, Mortar, 1998
Fig. 26. Nelson Edewor. The Face of Bad Leadership, Wood, 1999
Fig. 27. Nelson Edewor, Red Neck Beast is Rotten. Wood and Acrylic, 2003

Political decay can be gleaned in the corruption associated with the administration of oil allocations and infrastructural benefits to communities in the Niger Delta. The works (Figs. 24-27); “My People's Blood for Cake” (Edewor:1998), “Burden is our Reward” (Edewor: 1998), “The Face of Bad Leadership” (2000), and “The Red Neck Beast” (Edewor: 2003), are expressions of greed, untold hardship occasioned by government policies, wicked attitude to handling oil related matters and high handed penal law systems that have kept the Niger Delta environment as an economic grazing land without replenishment strategies. Evil administration systems are orchestrated by both external and internal actors. Whereas external actors are government systems, internal actors are contractors who obstinately fail in due diligence at the delivery of contracts meant to serve the community. The effects are loss of livelihood, deadly diseases, and broken homes due to unethical practices that attract local sacrilegious taboo penalties, economic hardship, unavailable healthcare systems, destroyed roads, and low school enrolment in the host villages.

5. Expressions of Social Abuse and Disharmony



Fig. 28



Fig. 29,



Fig. 30

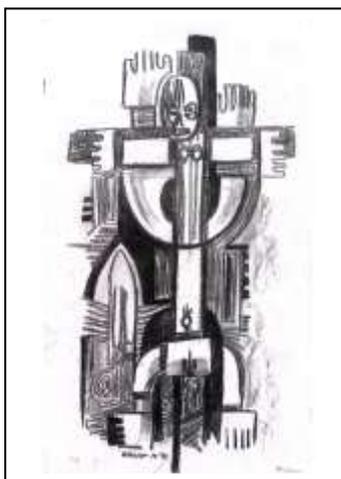


Fig. 31



Fig. 32

- Fig. 28. Nelson Edewor, *Nightmare at Noon*, Wood, 112cm, 1998
 Fig.29, Nelson Edewor, *He died in the Struggle*, Charcoal, 31cm x 52Cm, 2003, 2004
 Fig. 30, Nelson Edewor. *He Winked at Me*, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm
 Fig. 31, Nelson Edewor, *Odi on My Mind*, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm
 Fig. 32. Nelson Edewor, *Time to Go*. Bronze, 23cm, 2010

Modern Ivri in social abuse and disharmony express the effect of gross decay of the social fabric of sanctity to life and promotion of unhealthy living standards that causes social harmony and imbalance. Many youths have died in their prime in the struggle for a better Niger Delta. Major actors such as Isaac Adaka Boro died at 30, Ken Saro-Wiwa was 54 years at death. Research establishes that, out of the over 3000 armed clashes in four years, over 4,500 lives were lost in the militancy struggle (Sodiq Omolaoye: 2025).

The artworks Fig. 28-32, “Nightmare at Noon” (Edewor: 1998), “Odi on My Mind” (Edewor:1999), “He Died in the Struggle” (Edewor:2003), “He Winked at Me” (Edewor: 2004), and “Time to Go” (2010) express the gale of death of youth population and attack on family structures. In “He died in the Struggle” the composition presents a human figure lying-in- state with arms stretched apart before the entrance of a Cathedral, which symbolizes death by sacrifice on the altar of agitation for a better living condition. The full bloom sunflower at the feet symbolizes that this individual was at the blossom state of life when he or she was cut short. “He winked at me” is a terse statement of a young lady to her disapproving parents seeking a justification for her amoral involvement with a foreign oil company seismic staff.

Many young ladies in host communities have cut short their educational dreams due to teenage pregnancies for “Iyibo e’shele” (Shell white men). The eye, placed at the waist region of the female figure, symbolizes the single interest of the expatriate: a hit-and-run carnal exploitation.

6. Expressions of Wicked and Evil Tendencies



Fig. 33,



Fig. 34

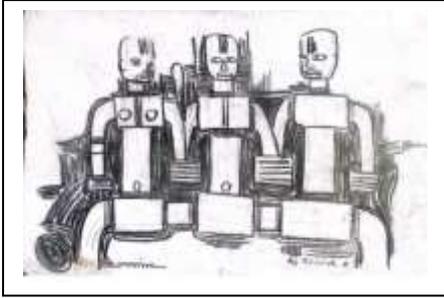


Fig. 35

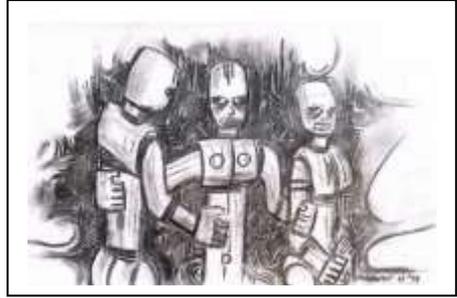


Fig. 36

Fig. 33. Nelson Edewor, A Monster is Strangling Us, Mortar, 140cm, 1998

Fig.34, Nelson Edewor, Let Us Take Oath Together, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm, 1999

Fig. 35, Nelson Edewor. Once Upon Three Robbers, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm, 1999

Fig. 36, Nelson Edewor, They Connive Everyday, 31cm x 52cm, 1999

The unabated machination of continued abuse of the Niger Delta environment through oil spills, gas flaring, and other forms of unprofessional practices, and have generated certain social evil tendencies that are inimical to the socio-economic development of the region. The artworks Figs. 33-36, “A Monster is Strangling Us” (1998), “Let us take Oath Together” (Edewor: 1999), “Once Upon Three Robbers” (1999) and “They Connive Everyday” (Edewor :1999), express evil machinations of organized (state actors) and unorganized (non-state actors) who are the perpetrators of rape of the region. Unfortunately, the Government establishment in respect of Ministries, Directorates and Agencies (MDAs), which are supposed to address the injustice in the land,

has surreptitiously become agencies of drainpipes for personal gain, while the masses suffer economic strangulation with attendant woes.

7. Expressions of Revolt and Protest/Agitations

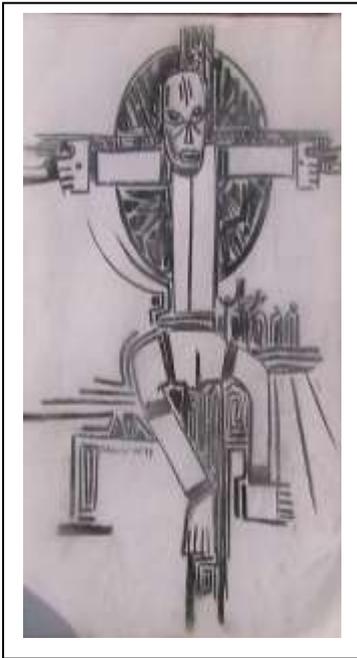


Fig. 37,



Fig.38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42

Fig. 37. Nelson Edewor, I Shall Not Die, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm, 1999

Fig.38, Nelson Edewor, God Must Hear This, 31cm x 52cm, 1999

Fig. 39, Nelson Edewor. Last Born, Wood, 130cm, 2000

Fig. 40, Nelson Edewor, Where Did I Go Wrong?, Wood, 101cm, 2000

Fig. 41. Nelson Edewor. Dance the Pains to Silence, Wood and raffia, 148cm, 2009

Fig 42, Nelson Edewor. Where Did I Go Wrong II?, Bronze, 23cm, 2010

Protest against unethical practices in petroleum oil exploitation in the Niger Delta has been in the front burner since 1966. Whereas Oil wealth through Land Use Act of 1978 that cedes the ownership of land to the state upon which all accruing wealth is used to service the nation's economy, the region is left to abject pollution and decay. The level of discontent by host communities resulted in organized protests and militancy over time. The artworks Figs. 38-42, "I shall not die" (Edewor 1999), "God Must Hear This" (Edewor: 1999), "The Last Born" (Edewor: 2003), "Where Did I Go Wrong I and II" (Edewor: 2003, 2010), "Dance the Pain to Silence" (Edewor: 2012), expounds resistance, resilience, and the undying spirit of the Niger Delta region to stand up to abuse. The Niger Delta, through PANDEF and other legitimate and maybe illegitimate means, will continue to fight until 100% resource control is achieved, as against the current paltry 13% derivation fund.

8 Expressions of Controlled Aggression



Fig 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46

Fig. 43. Nelson Edewor, *Against All Odds*, Wood, 224cm, 2007

Fig.44. Nelson Edewor, *Undaunted*, Bronze, 38cm, 2010

Fig. 45. Nelson Edewor. *Humble Adoration*, Wood, 155cm, 2003

Fig. 46. Nelson Edewor, *Peace Within I*, Wood, 228cm, 2018



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49

Fig. 47. Nelson Edewor. Peace Within, II, Wood, 185cm, 2010

Fig. 48. Nelson Edewor, I Dey My Town, Bronze, 18cm, 2010,

Fig. 49. Nelson Edewor. Friendship Forever, Bronze, 23cm, 2010

9. Expressions of self-Awareness



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52



Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig. 55

- Fig. 50. Nelson Edewor, On My Honour, Charcoal, 31cm x 52cm, 1999
 Fig.51, Nelson Edewor, My Time, Wood, 145cm, 1999
 Fig. 52, Nelson Edewor. The Prodigal returns, Wood, 162cm, 1999
 Fig. 53, Nelson Edewor, Home Sweet Home, Mixed Media, 152cm x 35cm, 2007
 Fig. 54. Nelson Edewor. My Hands Are clean, Wood and Rope, 272cm, 2008
 Fig. 55,Nelson Edewor, Olorogun Abo Woro'woro, Bronze, 18cm, 2010,

10.Expressions of Social Responsibility



Fig. 56



Fig. 57



Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60



Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63

- Fig. 56. Nelson Edewor, Nuptial Dance, Wood, 140cm, 2000
Fig. 57. Nelson Edewor, Man of Honour, 280cm, 2001
Fig. 58. Nelson Edewor, My Hands are Clean, Wood, 238cm, 2003
Fig. 59. Nelson Edewor, We Stand Together II, Bronze, 24cm, 2010
Fig. 60. Nelson Edewor. Power of the Head Gear, Wood, 185cm, 2002
Fig. 61. Nelson Edewor, Mother and Child, Wood, 135cm, 2006
Fig. 62. Nelson Edewor, Woman Delegate, Wood, 98cm, 2004
Fig. 63. Nelson Edewor. We Stand Together I, Wood, 188cm, 2002



Fig. 64



Fig. 65



Fig. 66

Fig. 64. Nelson Edewor, *The Hand That Giveth*, Wood, 175 x 112 x 120cm, 2003

Fig. 65. Nelson Edewor, *Women Leader*, Bronze, 28cm, 2010

Fig. 66. Nelson Edewor, *Litany for the Niger Delta*, Installation with varied Media, 2010

Aggression, being a natural negative emotional response to unsavoury conditions, has its negative consequences ranging from inability for self-control to abuse of privileges. The Niger Delta in its legitimate response to the abuse of its region has taken to actions that have been considered anti-state. The Isaac Boro Declaration of Niger Delta Republic (1966), Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990), Kaiama declaration (1998) were seen as direct affronts on the national security and sovereignty which must be crushed with national military might. These led to serious fatal consequences that sacked homes, communities and scores of thousands of lives. In seeking an “Ivri Emotional Equilibrium” of self-control and peace atop the raging beast of environmental abuse, sculptures that express calm disposition and sustainable gaits have been created: “Against All Odds” (Edewor: 2007), “Undaunted” (Edewor: 2010), “Humble Adoration” (2010), “Peace Within I and II” (Edewor: 2010, 2011), “I Dey My town” (Edewor:2010), and “Friendship Forever” (Edewor:2010) (Figs. 43-49).

Furthermore, control of Aggression stems from self-awareness based on potential factors that could turn the impact of injustice and rape around to a common social good: the works Figs. 50-55, “On My Honour” (Edewor 1999), “My Time” (Edewor: 1999), “The Prodigal Returns” (Edewor: 1999), “Home Sweet Home” (Edewor 2007), “My Hands are Clean” (Edewor: 2008), “Olorogun Abo Woro woro” (Edewor 2010), “I Know Myself” (Edewor: 2010) are significant realizations that promote self awareness which ensures calm and controlled aggressive impulses.

With a controlled aggression based on self-awareness, there is a need to take positive responsibility in promoting the virtues and values of regional development. These have their effect on micro and macro social dimensions as expressed in Figs. 56-66; “Nuptial Dance” (Edewor 2000), Man of Honour” (Edewor: 2001), “We Stand Together” I and II” (Edewor: 2002 and 2010), “Power of the Headgear” (Edewor: 2002), “Women Delegate” (2003), “The Hand that Giveth” (Edewor:2003), “Mother and Child” (Edewor: 2006), and, “Women Leader” (Edewor: 2010) and “Litany for the Niger Delta” (Edewor: 2010). It is in taking responsibility that potentials are transformed into verifiable constructs that elevate a people.

11. Expressions of Hope and a Better Tomorrow



Fig. 67



Fig. 68



Fig. 69



Fig. 70

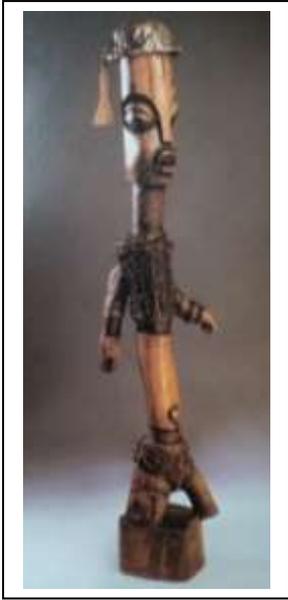


Fig. 71



Fig. 72



Fig. 73



Fig. 74



Fig. 75



Fig. 76

- Fig. 67. Nelson Edewor, *Eve Reloaded*, Wood, 163cm, 1999
 Fig. 68. Nelson Edewor, *African Scholar*, 215cm, 2001
 Fig. 69. Nelson Edewor, *Success is A Tall Man*, Wood and Fibre, 226cm, 2002
 Fig. 70. Nelson Edewor, *The Child Must BE King*, Installation, 320cm, 2004
 Fig. 71. Nelson Edewor. *Man of the People*, 302cm, 2009
 Fig. 72. Nelson Edewor, *Giant Strides*, Wood, 320cm, 2010
 Fig. 73. Nelson Edewor, *Enigmatic Leader*, Wood and Fibres, 325cm, 2010
 Fig. 74. Nelson Edewor. *The Lords Song on Glory Land*, Bronze, 28cm, 2010
 Fig. 75. Nelson Edewor, *Denge Pose*, Bronze, 28cm, 2010
 Fig. 76. Nelson Edewor, *I Have A Dream*, Bronze, 44cm, 2010

A future and better deal is the aspiration of every social contract. The Niger Delta in its present 70 years of interface with oil exploitation activities has suffered woes and conditions of abject poverty and abuse. Yet being the nativity of our birth, upon which our future generations will find abode and life, sculpture prophecies in modern Ivri contextualization has found expression thus in Figs. 70-76; “*Eve Reloaded*” (Edewor: 1999), “*African Scholar*” (Edewor: 2001), “*Success is a Tall Man*” (Edewor: 2002), “*The Child Must be King*” (Edewor: 2004), “*Man of the People*” (Edewor: 2009), “*Giant Strides*” (Edewor:2010), “*Enigmatic Leader*” (Edewor: 2010), “*The Lord’s Song in Glory Land*” (Edewor: 2010), “*Denge Pose*” (Edewor: 2010), and “*I have a Dr.eam*” (Edewor: 2010).

These artworks are aimed at promoting social health, emotional stability and common social trust needed to fulfill future personal and community visions of greatness. An Isoko adage which says “*Qm̄o r̄e ro vi’ose*” literarily meaning, the child must be greater than his father, supports the maxim that “youths are the leaders of

tomorrow”. What will be there tomorrow if the actions of today do not promote sustainable practices that leads to environmental sustainability? This proposition provokes a perpetual *Ivri* consciousness which demands to instill conscientious effort at riding inimical environmental challenges that inflame aggressive impulses that inadvertently result in destructive tendencies that negate aspirations of personal and group development.

Policy Implication: Towards Sustainable Practices that Promote a Socio-political, Economic and Environmental Niger Delta Devoid of Negative Aggressive Impulses

Niger Delta studies abound in varied disciplines. These are meant to investigate, identify as well as proffer solutions to the lingering effects of unwholesome exploitative activities of prospecting oil firms. My studio practice as this lecture, is a visual art approach to the subject. Indeed an artwork is worth a thousand words as it draws the attention of the audience to contemplate on the subject being addressed from an experiential level. My sculptures being metaphorical visual languages, are deep in local formal autography of *Ivri Corpus*. It is often said that one’s indigenous language is the truest form of self-expression.

In the context of this, the lecture seeks to advocate the following considerations for a better and sustainable society for further contemplation and action.

1. **Promotion of Sustainable Exploration Practices-** Sustainable exploration practices that promote international standards are needed to stem-off conditions expounded by “The Stream is Polluted Again”, “We cannot See the Face of the Monster”, “Burden is Our Reward” (Figs. 20, 22, 25) etc. such practices would include true engagement with the host communities, maintenance and security of existing infrastructure as well as paying adequate royalties. That is what can result in socio-political “Giant Strides” (Fig.70).
2. **Advocacy for Sustainable Agitation Systems-** It has become clear that direct confrontation with the government through secessionist declarations, arm struggle through militancy and other construed social vices only breed “He Died in the Struggle, “Odi on My Mind”, (Figs. 29 and 31). There is need to advance other advocacy strategies such as political lobbying, grass root mobilization and sensitization, media campaigns, legal actions and direct engagements devoid of fatal consequences. In true spirit of “My Hands are Clean”, “The Hand That Giveth”, (Figs 58, 64).
3. **Promotion of Grass Root Education-** All great nations today rose from the ashes of superstition through fidelity to sustainable education on the altar of rational thinking, scientific discoveries, exploration of the environment and managing its resources for the benefit of the community. The need for education in the different knowledge systems applicable to the oil resources extraction, distribution and

management and its attendant positive impacts cannot be overemphasized as espoused in “African Scholar” (Fig. 71). Imagine a Dangote Refinery in the Region, where 90% of its staff in the different industrial chain network, made up of qualified personnel are from the host communities. We cannot continue to be in the sidelines of unskilled indigenes armed with a flawed “Entitlement Syndrome”. Fidelity to education will produce Man of the People” and “enigmatic Leader” (Figs. 72, 73).

4. **Active Participation in National Political Systems-** The region must play its very fair share of politics of relevance at the local and national levels. Whereas in the purported hijacked President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s regime, of which the region did not fare to its developmental expectations, the region must not rest in its oars. The sculptural installation “The Child Must Be King” (Fig. 69) should continue to resonate in our consciousness in seeking for greater political heights. The region must seek her “Olorogun Abo Woro’woro” (Fig. 55), and in gender sensitivity her “Woman Delegate” (Fig. 62) to take on the mantle of political messiah-ship. Much of what we have now are political jobbers afflicted with “Stomach Infrastructure Syndrome”. Even the Church and Mosque are not left out of the infectious condition.

Conclusion

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, my due diligence as a sculptor and Art historical researcher, in commitment to decode, internalize, and externalize divine inspirations through visual idioms of expression, which this lectured has coined “Where God and Mortals Meet”, has expounded on the need for a better Niger Delta environment and society, drawing on Ivri Corpus contextualization

This studio research is, therefore, not a regurgitation of tradition, but a new formalism based on social reality aimed at stemming negative aggressive tendencies in modern society arising from the exploitative exploration of oil, which, in its administration has soiled the region environmentally, physically, psychologically, mentally, economically, politically, and socially, in very devastating fatal dimensions.

As a revealed formal essence, while establishing the fact that artists are prophets of formal expression, my modern Ivri, whether as drawings, sculptures and installations, are portals of reinventing a brighter Niger Delta *social-scape*. Indeed “I Have a Dream” (Fig. 74) that someday the Niger Delta will be a beautiful haven. where our children shall not experience “Nightmare at Noon” (Fig. 28), but shall “Sing the Lord’s Song on Glory Land” (Fig.74), in affluence and in fulfilment attuned after Cecil Frances Alexander’s “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (A&M 442).

Refrain:

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful:
the Lord God made them all.

1. Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colors,
and made their tiny wings.
(Refrain)

2. The purple-headed mountains,
the river running by,
the sunset and the morning
that brightens up the sky.
(Refrain)

3. The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden:
God made them every one.
(Refrain)

4. God gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty,
who has made all things well.
(Refrain)

My Stewardship

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, since I resumed duty on the 30th of June, 2000, I have been on my toes, serving this university through the grace of God with quality service to the system. I started cutting my teeth in administration as a Student Course Adviser. Then Member Exam Committee and eventually Examination Officer at the Departmental level, and Head Sculpture Section in the Department. I later became a Staff Adviser to the Faculty of Arts Students Association (FASA), 2004-2015. My service beyond the Faculty level began in 2013, after I returned from my Postdoctoral studies at the University of London in 2012, under the administration of Prof. A.E Arubayi. I was appointed Chairman Screening Panel of Delsu Work-Study Programme (2013), Undercover member Anti-Corruption Committee Chairman (2013), Abraka Hall Master (2014), Member Screening/ Certificate Verification Committee (2014), Hall Master, Abraka Hall (2015), Vice Chancellor's Rep, SUG Electoral Commission, DELSU, (2013 -2014), Chairman/ Member, Delsu, Student's Work Scheme Screening Committee, (2013-2015), Chairman, Indigent Students Work Scheme- (2015), Member, Panel to investigate alleged fraudulent payment of School fees and Registration of Courses by some Postgraduate Students. (2016), Member, Reconstituted Committee on Students Work Scheme (2016/ 2018), Chairman, Examination Malpractice Mobile Disciplinary Panel, (2014-2020), Member, University Convocation Committee (Chairman, Protocol and Publicity Sub-

Committee) (2015-2019), Member, Committee to investigate Result Alterations in Faculty of Social Sciences, DELSU, (2015), Ag Head of Department, (2015-2018), Member, TETFund Staff Training Committee (2015-2017), Member, DELSU @ 25 Planning Committee (2017), Member, DELSU Praise Planning Committee (2015-2019), Member, TETFund Book Publication Committee, (2018), Deputy Director, Centre for Research and International Programmes (CRIP). (2018), Member Standing Committee to investigate all Staff and Students Complaints (2015-2019), Member, Pre-Degree Board (2016 to 2019), Chairman, Certificate Verification Committee (2019-2020), Member, Committee on Review of Penalties Recommended for Various Offences (Gross Misconduct) by Staff and Students. (2019), Member, Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer (IPTTO) Policy Committee (2019), Ag Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies, Delsu, (2018-2019), Member, Committee on Renewal of Penalties Recommended for Various Offences (Gross Misconduct) by Staff and Students. (2019), Member, Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Office (IPTTO) Policy Committee. (2019), Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies, Delsu, (2020-2022), Member, Entrepreneurship Studies Board, (2020), Vice Chancellor's Rep to Faculty of Clinical Sciences for Junior Academic Appraisal 2020-2025), Senate Rep to DELSU Council Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee, (2022-2025), Member, Sub-Committee on the Controversy Surrounding the Nomenclature of Ph.D Result of Mr. Adogbeji of the Department of Library and Information Science (2023), Chairman Investigative Committee

on Student Disturbance during SUG Movie Night- (2024), Chairman Exhibition Committee on Vice Chancellors' End of Tenure activities- (2024). Dean, Faculty of Arts. (2023-2025), Dean of the Faculty of Arts, (2025 till date, Second tenure).

Acknowledgement

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