



EXHIBITION

By Ijeoma Oguachuba

A Passion for Nomads



A desert region can be defined in many ways. To a meteorologist, a desert can be defined as an area receiving an annual rainfall of 10" or less. Definitely a dry, hot zone.

Always the desert hold an intrigue that draw tourists. There are the sand dunes, with herds of camels strolling leisurely through the baking sun. There is a lot of variety within the desert, from their interesting nomadic lifestyles, with their faces almost hidden from the sun, to sprawling landscapes.

This desert experience can be felt at the exhibition of jewelry and ethnic arts titled 'Tess and Her World' at Quintessence, Ikoyi.

As Tess Ax:son Johson sat on the beautiful African designed chair in Quintessence, her eyes tell that she lives her life with the intend of enjoying every moment of it.

Johson is a Swedish anthropologist, who lives in Agadez, a desert town in the northern part of Niger. Her first visit to Nigeria, Johson have always been interested in anthropology which she admits to having allowed herself to be totally integrated by the Touaregs. This integration can be seen as she spoke with great passion about the people and the influence they have had on her.

Her art is full of intricate ethnic designs. According to her: Whenever she had the chance she travelled. Of course the result of this travels can be seen. Also an art collector, Tess, as she is fondly called, collects different ethnic items and jewelry. She revealed that she used to have a gallery in Stockholm where she displayed her treasures, for sale.

As a youngster, Tess spent time in her father's and grandfather's library reading every book she could find, on explorers and different cultures, especially books from South Africa.

She tells her first voyage story. "In the eighties, my son and I, who was at that time five years old, got the opportunity to travel to South America.

I had just finished my studies in Video and Photography at that time. My son and I ended up living with the mountain Indians in the south of Colombia, where I made a series of photos of my son meeting with a new culture. I later presented our trip for school children in Sweden."

About Africa: Tess, who have lived in Niger since 1995, discloses, "I travelled to Africa several time. But it was not until 1992 when I went to visit a friend in Niger that I got hooked. I got to know the nomads and found a lot of strength and creativity with them. That was when I started to design my own jewelry."

Taking a closer look at her jewelry.

Taking a closer look at her, she might pass for a nomad dressed in a long black embroidered attire. Adorned with elaborate jewelry, she makes a picture of a rich nomad's wife, bare face, complete with her long black plaited hair. She admits to having a mixed background, fifty per cent Swedish though the other percent is unknown.

Tess spends so much time with the nomads in the desert and has adapted to their lifestyle. It is rare considering how uncomfortable it can be for the white. She



follows them in search of water and food for their animals. To her, it is a tough but free life.

"This life has inspired me in many ways. This led me to start designing my own jewelry."

On display for the exhibition are her works, ethnic designed jewelry: bangles, glass necklaces, bead with silver necklaces, rope with silver necklaces, and ear rings.

All these are inspired by the Touareg and Wodaabe tribes. There are the silver bangles which are inspired by the heavy anklets wore by the Wodaabe tribe. The glass beads are gotten from different parts of West Africa.

The art collector, Tess also displays her ethnic collection, which include intricately designed wallets, hat, clothes. Also on display are items used by the Touareg men for their male beauty pageants.

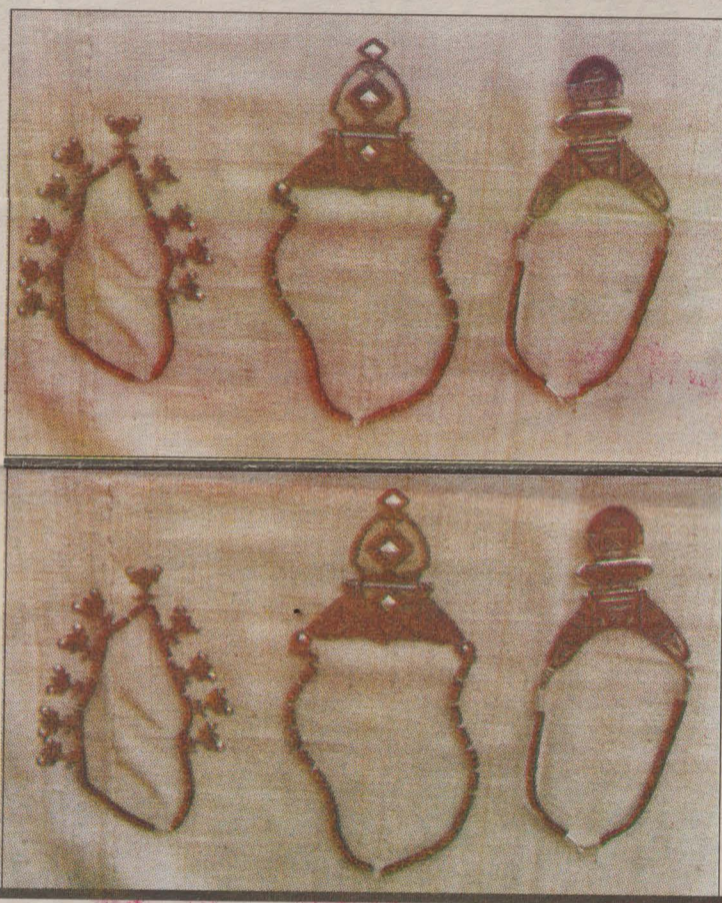
Also showing at the exhibition are collections of

Remi, Lagos, by Oluremi Osholake, a fashion designer and expert; and music by Mohamad Ahar, better known as, Mouma (from Niger).

Through this exhibition, Tess will share her experience and show her viewers qualities of the Touareg and Wodaabe cultures. Her experience and travels have taught Tess a lot of patience, and respect for others.

Displaying a wide smile, she hesitates for a minute then reveals one of her projects. What she wants to do is in her mind now, she says. It is to open a six-bedrooms hotel that will have her personal touch. She hopes to achieve this by decorating it with her designs which will also be up for sale to her guests.

The exhibition will run till May 11, 2002.



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and his environment.

Polo is a sport loved by Europeans mostly. His paintings namely: *The Fall, Polo Game I and II, Frankie Dettori, Show Jumping* and *The Face of a Champion* divulge, unknowingly by the artist, the challenges he has faced as an artist in outside his country, Nigeria. This works and titles disclose the encounters of Adegborioye; his falls and triumphs.

In his nature series, the artist derived joy in his manipulation of colours and brush strokes. 'Homage to Van Gogh' are three identical-like bright impasto works, inspired by the late painter, Vincent Van Gogh. The painting transmit that Adegborioye imitated the painter as his style of work was used, in the Homage paintings.

'The Big Catch' I and II show the tiger, as the predator, with its already dead prey in its mouth as always the unknowingly reveal his views of life. But the big question is who is the predator? Is it Adegborioye?

Also 'The Feast' I and II, each of the two paintings show a bird feasting on its younger and smaller bird prey. 'The Feast II' description is more glaring to the fact that destruction is fast beoming the order of the day. The painting reveal a bird feeding on its smaller prey, the background setting is that of a

burning forest. It shows the stronger over powering the lesser. This is what is happening in the war torn areas of the world where those with more sophisticated power and daringness are killing the innocent and less developed ones. This painting is direct in its message, unlike the 'The Feast I'. There are different outlooks to the work. It can be viewed both economically and technologically in terms of what the European countries are doing to the so called 'third world countries.'

In the Bushing Bush series, the artist makes it clear that he is talking about destruction of nature. He said that it "brings to mind the great havoc, which fire can cause. Apart from that, it makes a case against destruction of wild life nay nature."

Among the Fire series are 'We Walked Through Armageddon' and 'Too Late! Ground Zero' all epitome of the September 11, 2001, World Trade Centre disaster in New York.

Also on display in 'Exotic Feast' are semi-abstract works by Adegborioye namely 'Family Members' I and II, and 'Fish Everywhere'. Rukeme Noserime, Director of School of Art, Design & Printing Technology, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, describes Adegborioye. "The Artist has through his impressions defined certain visual

characteristics, such as detail, imagery, pose, costume, manipulation, contrast, surface and composition. These paintings also convey a specificity of space, time, character and event.

In conveying painting as a form of communication, he has been able to achieve the instant observer of reality. It is this power of individual artistic vision and recognition that gives, Kunle the capacity to highlight and transform images of reality into images of visual aesthetic contemplation and delight.

His works convey a strong figuration of dynamic visual rhythm."

The viewers are appreciative of the works of the artist which turn out not to be boring as would have expected. Realism being thought as boring and relegated the older generation.

His works which are basically for aesthetics purposes have a refreshing and an almost unfamiliar accent, bearing in mind that that realism is being shelved by most exhibiting artists here, as they show lack of enthusiasm preferring surrealism, abstract and semi-abstract.

Installations have become more interactive for the vibrant ones as they want to make their mark known though there are debates on these issues.