



LIZAMORE
& Associates

MKPESE KARMA

the present into the future

a solo exhibition by

USEN OBOT

28.10.23 - 30.11.23

The works in my Mkpese Series draws from the practice and narrative of history.

They re-image a part of Africa that fused its governance, cultural, historical, spiritual and political practices through visual reinterpretations that explore aesthetic forms of abstraction and materials. These works blur the line between painting and sculpture, and stretches from paintings in various mediums to metal, wood, fiberglass and biodegradable materials.

My work references the 'Ekpo Society' in South - South Nigeria for engagement in contemporary culture as they metaphorically present nuances, innuendos and psychoanalysis of relationships, communities and history. They interconnect individuality, governance, politics, administration and religion.

Read more about the artist from Page 15

MKPESE KARMA



the spirit that guides us 1
2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

95 x 107 cm

R32 000

MKPESE KARMA



the spirit that guides us 2
2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant
95 x 107 cm

R32 000

MKPESE KARMA



*the spirit that guides us 3
2023*

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

95 x 107 cm

R32 000

MKPESE KARMA



The triangle of life

2023

wood relief sculpture,
acrylic, and galvanised iron
80 x 80 cm

R18 500

MKPESE KARMA



gifts from the last god
2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

150 x 160 cm

R80 000

MKPESE KARMA



truth seekers are lightbearers

2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

150 x 160 cm

R80 000

MKPESE KARMA



Brotherhood
2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant
130 x 90 cm

R48 500

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Velvet embrace of darkness

2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

130 x 90 cm

R48 500

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Good & Evil

2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic,
metal & wood sealant

130 x 90 cm

R48 500

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Conversations

2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic
and galvanised iron

150 x 90 cm

R50 000

MKPESE KARMA



Daddy will be back for the flowers
2023

wood relief sculpture, acrylic and
galvanised iron

140 x 90 cm

R50 000

MKPESE KARMA



The Elders

2022

wood relief sculpture and
stainless steel

150 x 40 x 24 cm each

R81 000

R27 000 EACH

Artist Profile

Usen Obot creates intricate, phantasmagoric paintings on diverse media such as fibre glass, canvas, leather, Perspex, fabric, paper and wood that deftly merge abstraction and stylized figuration. His works are complex and yet playful, textured multi-layered oeuvre, which in some he bedecks with a signature blend of Raffia, adire and tie-dye fabrics. His works—vibrant, symbolic, and sometimes mysterious—draw upon the social and socio-political practices of centuries old African culture that fused religion, governance, spirituality, interpersonal relationships and community cohesion. He juxtaposes these with the present day governance and administrative practice in African societies and contemporary culture. Employing a diverse range of aesthetic and cultural sources, chiefly, among others, the Ekpo and Ekpe societies of the Ibibio people, Africa's version of democracy and governance. Obot's work investigates the intersection of community, instituted practices, re-imagining Africa's narratives of religion and spirituality, representation and future placements. Obot's oeuvre also communicates the significance of the spirit world in African culture and reiterates the integral value of African spirituality in the holistic creation and maintenance of social order.

Through the deconstructive techniques of cutting, shredding, stripping, carving and stapling both subject and support, Obot reconstructs new codes and modalities. His works were part of the 'Bridge to Chicago' group exhibition, Gallery Guichard, Chicago, USA in 2009. In 2010 he had his first Museum solo exhibition titled 'In Living Memory' at The Red Location Museum, Port Elizabeth. Also included in the exhibition 'RE. SPONSE at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum which subsequently travelled to the William Humphrey's Art Gallery, Kimberly. In 2017, his work was part of the Sanlam National Competition top 100, and was awarded the Arts and Culture Herald Citizen of the year in 2021. 'Mkpese: then, now and future history' opened at the RAW Spot gallery, Rhodes University, Grahamstown in 2021, and 'Mkpese, the incarnate' opened at the Nelson Mandela University Bird street gallery in 2022.

Obot's works have been shown locally and internationally both in solo and group exhibitions, and are in numerous public collections including the Red Location Museum, Port Elizabeth, NANDOS art collection (South Africa, Nigeria and Turkey), The Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, Amazon, and ABSA Bank among others. For more than two decades, Obot's career has taken diverse roles, as the founder and director of an art gallery with substantive support for the NewNowNext Emerging Artists. A non-profit arts competition and awards for emerging artists in South Africa. Nurturing creative talent within and beyond the local community of Port Elizabeth, the gallery and NewNowNext offered residencies, and other professional development opportunities to young artists and students.

Born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Obot studied Art and Design at the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, and BA in Fine and Applied Arts at Institute and Management Technology, Enugu. He moved to and continues to live and work in South Africa.

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