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BALTIC

Ifeoma U. Anyaeji *Ezuhu ezu – In(complete)*



From left to right: Etiti Etiti (Centre, Centre), 2016. Courtesy the artist; Ifeoma U. Anyaeji in front of Akpalakpa II (Weave), 2012. Courtesy the artist; A no m'eba, ma na anoho mu eba (I am here, but I am not here – presence, absence), 2016. Courtesy the artist.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art is pleased to present the first UK solo exhibition by Ifeoma U. Anyaeji, an artist born in Nigeria who works with non-biodegradable plastics to create striking artworks. Taking over BALTIC's level 2 gallery, the exhibition, which includes a selection of recent work by Anyaeji, will explore consumption and excess through her materials; weaving used and discarded plastic bottles and bags into intricate sculptures.

Anyaeji's interests lie in traditional craft processes and the use of non-conventional materials. Identifying as a 'Neo-traditional' artist, Anyaeji's creative practice looks at the traditions of West African culture within a globalised society, as well as Nigerian traditional aesthetics and cultural environmental ideologies. Anyaeji engages with current issues of over pollution and the consequences of waste on our environment by using non-biodegradable plastics at a moment where artists and scientists are working with these same materials to comment on the impact human kind is having on the planet.

To create her conceptually complex and organic sculptures, Anyaeji uses discarded plastic and polyethylene bags and bottles; two of the most significant global environmental pollutants. By using a concept she developed and describes as *Plasto-art*, she repurposes the bags and bottles using a Nigerian hair-plaiting technique called *Threading* (or *Ikpa Owu* in Igbo language), turning them into malleable textiles to work with. Weaving the vibrantly-coloured plastic together, Anyaeji creates distinctive sculptures which are characterised by lines, circles and loops.

Anyaeji draws specifically on Nigerian folklore, fashion, music and poetry in her work – in previous exhibitions she has also incorporated domestic furniture and architecture into the forms and structures of her sculptures. Through her experiments with form and material, Anyaeji's work calls into question the value systems attributed to materials and waste, transforming one of the environment's greatest threats to result from excessive human consumption into contemplative sculpture.

Notes to Editors

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About Ifeoma Anyaeji

Ifeoma U. Anyaeji (born 1981, Benin City, Nigeria) grew up in a society fuelled by the dualities of excesses and repression, where art was yet to be accepted as a suitable profession. Anyaeji decided to pursue her artistic practice as a full-time career exploring her boundaries as a female artist beyond the conventions of her initial academic training in painting.

Anyaeji holds a BA in painting from the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, an MFA degree in sculpture from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, USA; and is currently undertaking an Interdisciplinary PhD at Concordia University, Montreal. She has participated in several exhibitions in Africa, Europe and the USA, including: *Les Éclaireurs – sculpteurs*, d'Afrique Palais des Papes, Avignon, France; *Home: Contemporary African Artists Consider Place and Identity in Our Connected World*, The Miller Gallery, Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio. Upcoming exhibitions include: *Plastic Entanglements: Ecology, Aesthetics, Materials*, February-June 2018 at the Palmer Museum of Art, Penn State University, USA, travelling through January 2020 to Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts and the Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin. Collections include Fondation Jean-Pierre Blachere, Apt, France, US Embassy, Abuja, Nigeria, Art in Embassies Program, US State Department, Washington, D.C.

About BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England and has welcomed over seven million visitors since opening to the public in July 2002. BALTIC presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation and commissioning of contemporary visual art.

Housed in a landmark ex-industrial building, BALTIC consists of 2,600 square metres of art space, making it the UK's largest dedicated contemporary art institution. BALTIC has gained an international reputation for its commissioning of cutting-edge temporary exhibitions. It has presented the work of over 460 artists of 60 nationalities in 220 exhibitions to date.