

CONVERSATION WITH OMOTOYOSI OGUNLENDE, THEKRAFTZONE



Omotoyosi Ogunlende, known artistically as theKraftzone (formerly 5and1okraftzone), is a Nigerian-born, UK-based multidisciplinary artist whose work spans sculpture, muralism, string art, and origami. With a background in Fine Art and Sculpture from Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, he has developed a distinctive practice that blends traditional techniques with contemporary themes. Ogunlende's string art portraits, which he began exploring after attending a creative conference in South Africa in 2016, have garnered significant attention. He is recognized as one of the few artists in Nigeria creating string portraits, which are characterized by their semi-silhouette style, achieved by threading colored strings through a grid of nails, resulting in vibrant and dynamic representations of his subjects.

Beyond his artistic creations, Ogunlende is deeply committed to education and community engagement. He teaches string art to children during school holidays, fostering creativity and hands-on skills among the younger generation. His dedication to integrating art with education and healing is further exemplified by his fellowship with the Global Arts in Medicine program. Through his multifaceted practice, theKraftzone invites audiences to experience art as a transformative force, bridging cultural divides and promoting dialogue across different mediums and contexts.

On their journey to arts

I am a Nigerian-born artist specializing in captivating string art portraits, with a foundation in sculpture from Nigeria. My early career in the vibrant Lagos arts scene included roles at Terra Kulture, the Nigerian Cultural Centre, as Craft Shop Supervisor and Gallery Curator/Supervisor.

I have exhibited in exhibitions such as GODS OF THIS AGE, NEW NAMES, INNER THOUGHTS, and international showcases in Ghana and Brazil. I have also evolved my artistic focus into a mastery of string art, which led to notable commissions like the LAGOS WATERWAYS AUTHORITY (LASWA) logo and portraits of prominent Nigerians such as King Sunny Ade, RMD (Richard Mofe-Damijo), and the late Herbert Wigwe, Access Bank CEO, to mention just a few.

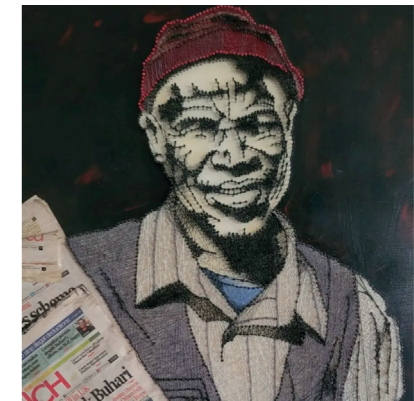
I have also developed a passion for teaching art in schools, with over 10 years of experience.

Presently residing in Belfast, UK, I've channeled my artistic skills and passion into community engagement, empowering young people through art and utilizing my expertise in string art and metal sculpting to create impactful arts-and-crafts workshops. My journey—from a sculptor with diverse exhibition experience to a string artist and now a youth worker in Belfast, UK—reflects a continuous dedication to the enriching and connective power of art.

On personal education, and creative education viewed locally and globally

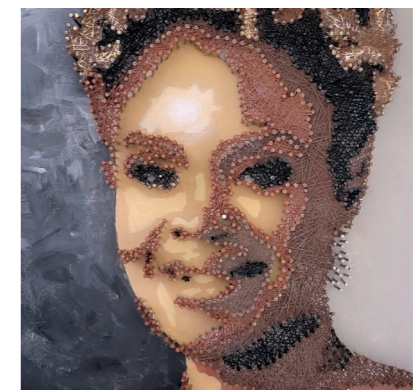
I have a Higher National Diploma in Fine Art (Sculpture, Metal).

My opinion about the creative sector in Nigeria is that it has grown really drastically over the years, where young and upcoming artists gain international exhibitions and recognition, just like this platform you give me.



Messages I would like to cover or convey with my art will be childhood experiences, Black History Month, past and present leaders, or notable champions in different fields.

Messaging with art



On Art as a representation of reality or escape from it

I believe that art is often reflective of contemporary reality, hopes, and flaws. Many artists draw inspiration from their lived experiences and the world around them, using their work to comment on political, social, environmental, and emotional issues of their time.

For instance, I draw reflections from nature and pictures. Modern art frequently tackles themes like climate change, identity, mental health, and systemic injustice, which are clear indicators of today's global concerns.

So, in a way, art lives in two dimensions: it is deeply rooted in its time, yet capable of reaching beyond it. That's what makes it so powerful—it can be both a mirror of the present and a bridge to the eternal.

While I haven't personally sold art online or dealt with online galleries as such, I've observed how digital marketplaces and social platforms can provide artists with autonomy over their work and pricing.

They allow global exposure and direct engagement with collectors, curators, and fans, which was nearly impossible for many artists in the past. There are still significant challenges, such as discoverability, fair pricing, and protection against art theft or reproduction without consent.

A few things could help to improve online representation and income for artists:

- i. Better algorithms and curation – i.e., online.
- ii. Educational tools – Many artists struggle with the business side of art. Offering resources on pricing, marketing, copyright, and branding could empower them to navigate online sales more successfully.
- iii. Stronger community support – Platforms that encourage interaction, feedback, and collaboration (like Behance or ArtStation) can help artists grow through visibility and networking.
- iv. Fairer commission models – Reducing high commission fees or offering tiered options could make online selling more financially sustainable for emerging artists.
- v. Digital certification and blockchain – Tools like NFTs (beyond just hype) or digital certificates of authenticity could protect artists' rights and create new revenue streams.

Online galleries and marketing artwork online

