

## Osi Audu

### Artist Statement

The dualism of the tangible and intangible is an area of focus in my work. I am very interested in questions like - Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the nature of consciousness? Who looks out with my eyes? Who is it in my ear who hears my voice? What is it that interprets neural impulses in the brain into vision, sounds...? Where does consciousness originate? I find scientific, philosophical, and cultural concepts about the nature of consciousness, and the mind/body relation very fascinating. For example, the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria, believe that consciousness, referred to as the head, has both a physical dimension called the outer head, and a spiritual one, the inner head, and that it originates from a place referred to as eternity. It is the visual implications of some of these concepts that I explore in my work. In my diptych paintings made with acrylic, wool, and graphite on canvas, I use abstract geometric forms that evoke the human head to present the sheer beauty of color and texture in a way that can be viscerally felt, as well as responded to psycho-physiologically by the eyes; and invite viewers to consider the process of visual perception:

*If the viewer stares fixedly at the center of the painted panel on the left for about ten seconds, and then transfers gaze to the center of the drawn panel on the right, an after-image will appear in the complementary colors.*

This visual experience of the after-image is my way of referring to this dualism of the tangible and intangible - what is revealed and hidden, in the way we engage with the sense of self. My graphite and black pastel drawings titled self-portrait and sequentially numbered, in which I explore the chromatic, light absorbing and reflecting qualities of both mediums, are more about the portrait of the self – that intangible essence of being, and the head as a container of memory, dreams, ideas, and aspirations.

I explore working in very contrasting scales, from very large to very small, to investigate a wider spectrum of the viewer/object relation. Since the visual impact of a field of color, and the psycho-physiological effect on the retina is an area of deep fascination for me in my diptych paintings, I feel that the larger the field of color, the more immersive, and therefore more intense, the visual experience and response are. Works in the smaller scale are very intimate, and still demonstrate something of the monumental in the composition.

As for my new drawings on paper, due to the absence of any use of light and shade in my drawings, the scale emphasizes the flatness of the shapes, and show that it is due to the visual memory and intelligence of the mind's eye, that viewers construct a three-dimensional image of the work when they look at the drawings from sufficient distance. The much smaller-scaled drawings serve as studies for the larger ones.

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