



Nnenna Okore, *Okochi*, 2017, burlap, dye, and wire, 68 x 66 x 12"

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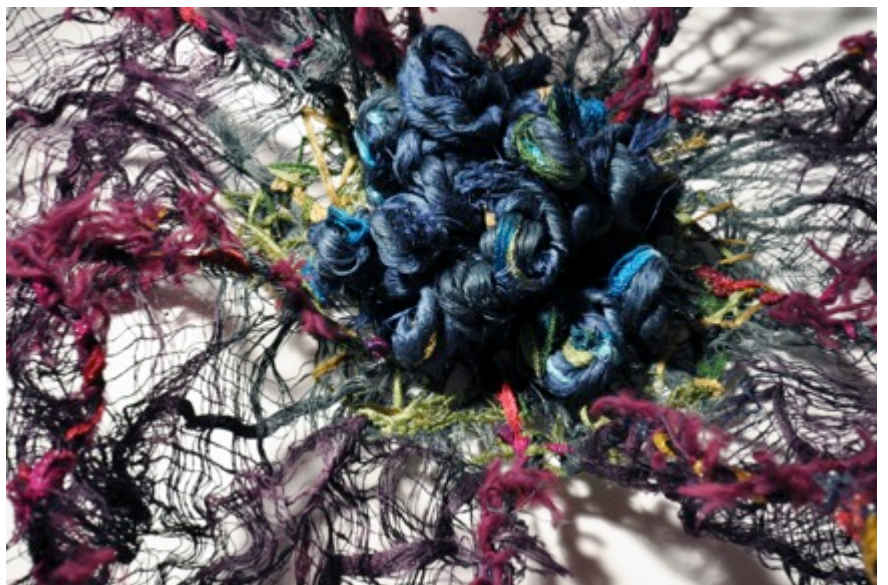
NNENNA OKORE OSIMILI

June 1 – July 22, 2017

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce *Nnenna Okore: Osimili*. The Nigerian raised Fulbright Fellow's exhibition of abstract, richly textured wall sculptures from recycled materials is on view through July 22, 2017.

Metaphorically speaking, *Osimili*, the Igbo word for a huge body of water, alludes to the fluidity and volatility of life. By referencing organic elements in nature, such as roots, veins, and flora, the works highlight the complex dynamism of our cosmic existence – the animistic force that breathes life into matter. The inference to water underscores the phenomenon of transience and transformation. This exhibition will express the theatrics of movement and flow, and the subtle reflections of aging, fragility, decay, materiality and ephemerality.

The abstract sculptures comprising *Osimili*, surround the viewer with works extending up the walls and onto the ceiling or into the center of the exhibition spaces. The wall sculpture *Ndu bu Isi* (in Igbo means 'Life is the genesis of all things') made of burlap, dye and wire, refers to life. And like many of the works featured in this themed show, the essence of life is expressed through floral symbolism. *Ndu bu Isi* centers on the enigmatic and phenomenal qualities of life. Derived from the variant name, 'Ndubisi' that is usually borne by the firstborn males in Igbo land, it captures the notion that (patrilineal) continuity only prevails with an added (male) life; and is therefore the foundation of our existence. In this work, the artist states, "I aspire to represent through the use of visual



Nnenna Okore, *Ndu bu Isi*, 2017, burlap, dye, and wire, 55 x 65 x 14", detail

metaphor, and vibrant elements the potency and ephemerality of life and its natural cycles.”

Nnenna Okore states, “I am interested in understanding the role that people, materials and geography play in shaping and redefining our ecological landscape.” While her works have evolved in the last decade, they continue to reveal the uniquely diverse and tactile characteristics of our shared physical world. “My goal as an artist is to find inspiration around me and inspire others.”

Nnenna Okore, who studied under El Anatsui, the recipient of the 56th Venice Biennale Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement, creates organic and twisted structures that mimic the intricacies of the fabric, trees, bark, and topography familiar from her childhood in Nigeria. Okore’s manually repetitive techniques of fraying, tearing, teasing, weaving, dyeing, waxing, accumulating, and sewing recall her childhood experiences, where she watched and participated in daily manual activities, like cooking, washing, harvesting, and fabricating brooms. Okore’s elaborate sculptures interact with their environments; she often strategically lights the work to cast shadows and highlight particular aspects of the work. She sometimes pairs her sculptures with ambient sounds or video projections recalling her childhood in Nigeria.

Nnenna Okore is a Professor of Art at Chicago’s North Park University, where she chairs the Art department and teaches Sculptural Practices. She earned her B.A. degree in Painting from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and both MA and MFA from the University of Iowa. Okore is a 2012 Fulbright Award recipient, along with numerous national and international awards. She participated in over a hundred solo and group exhibitions over the last decade. Recent exhibitions include the Memphis Brook Museum of Art, Memphis, and Children’s Museum of the Arts, New York. She has upcoming exhibitions at Mattatuck Art Museum, Connecticut and N’Namdi Center for Contemporary Art, Detroit. Okore lives and works in both Nigeria and Illinois.

For more information on this exhibition please contact the gallery at 415.677.0770 or sf@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com



Right: Nnenna Okore, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, 2016, burlap, dye, and wire, 91 x 95 x 12” **Left:** Nnenna Okore, *Okilikili*, 2017, burlap, dye, and wire, 70 x 60 x 12”