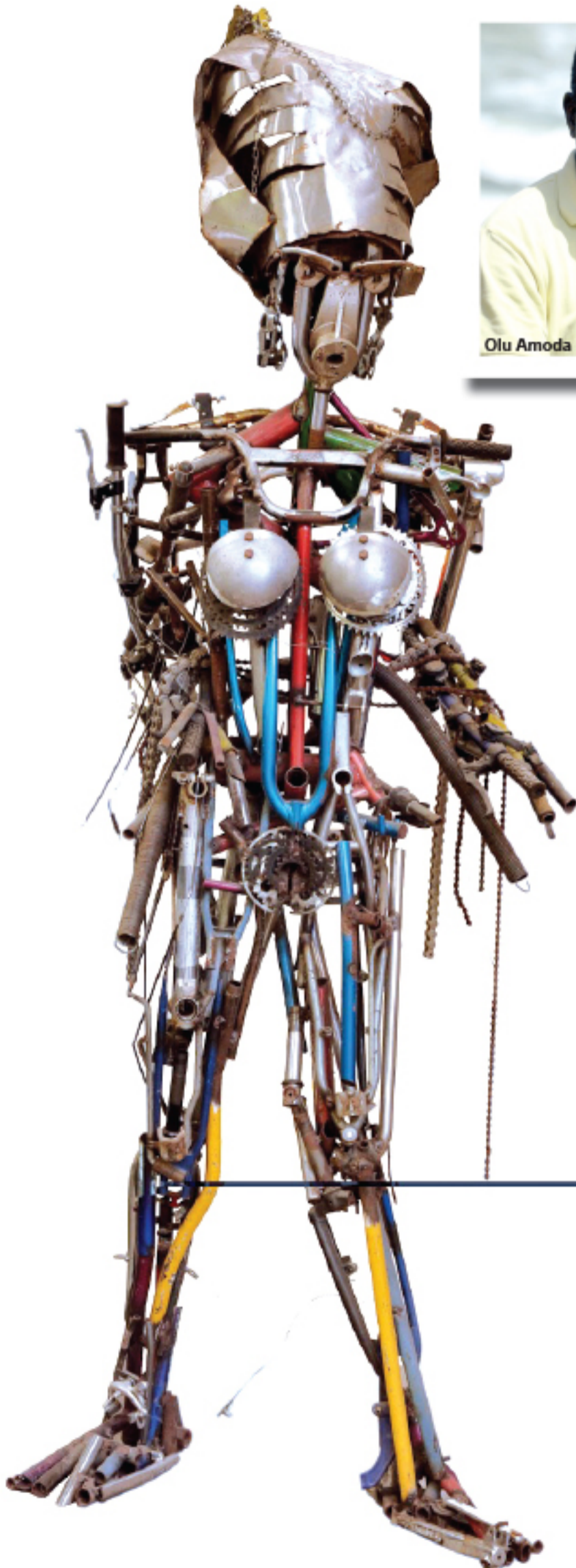


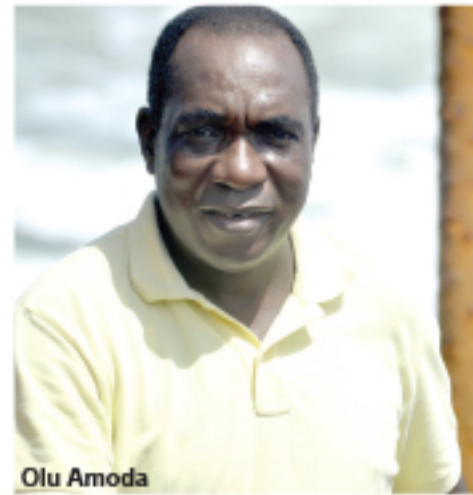
# SPECIAL REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2013

## Amoda thrills arts' enthusiasts with metallic masterpieces



A metallic human skeleton.



Olu Amoda



Art lovers at the exhibition.

### OLANIYI OLA

Recently, arts' enthusiasts were thrilled by rare metallic masterpieces from the repertoire of Olu Amoda — one of Nigeria's finest sculptors. They saw what stood for excellent representation of literature, life and visual arts in metallic sculpture at the Eko Hotels and Suites as Art21 staged one of the most successful exhibitions of contemporary art. Like an alchemist turning scrap metal to intricate art forms, Amoda's work involves welding several discarded objects, including iron together. He uses precious metals to create sculptural pieces that are full of authoritative contrasts.

Skoto Aghahowa, Director, Skoto Gallery, New York, says that Amoda's monuments are "gritty and seductive, brooding and redemptive, personal and monumental all at the same time." He observes that "the power of the work derives from its combination of abstract shapes with pointed references to the human form while the use of other materials enhance the crisp contours and imparts a solidity typical of conventional sculpture that are imbued with enigmatic beauty that reflects subtle understanding of context, respect for tradition while embracing modernism and capable of attaining a synthesis between matter and space."

Observers of art say that "there is no doubt that Amoda is an internationally celebrated Nigerian sculptor, muralist, furniture designer, and multi-media artist whose iconic work using 'recycled' or re-purposed materials and metal expresses the very best of modern African sensibility.

Olu Amoda himself tells you about

his work in very simple manner. "Nails and other metallic objects that are used in my work are applied as a metaphor." He says. "They have survived generations and remain one of the most ideal and enduring pieces of engineering. These materials, particularly nails, depend on the notion of shared responsibilities, like

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ants. Small but lethal, a nail is able to defend itself, but yields to will of the craftsman. What we call little things are merely the causes of great things: they are the beginning, the embryo and the point of departure, which generally speaking, decides the whole future of an existence." It was one night of blockbusting contemporary art show in Lagos, providing a boost following a lukewarm pace of impressionist and modern African art in recent times. Poised to attract artists who are desirous of a global audience for their work, Art21 gallery showcased the sculptural works of Olu Amoda as he cross-examines the society in a country, which was once glorious.

However, for contemporary Nigerian art buyers, who believe that the industry has not seen much change in the last 20 to 25 years. The Warri-boy, Amoda, is no doubt one of the most distinguished sculptors of his generation.

He tells you his unique approach to this delicate work of metallic sculpture -- "I work with what I find and also decide on the form of the new and final piece when I have gathered the component parts."

He says, "I weld and assemble things such as discarded nails and old locks into intricate sculpture and solid security doors designed to keep thieves out. The intricate thing about my work is that I am interested in the former lives of the objects I use and in the new meanings they take on when they are brought together."

As part of efforts to encourage art and culture in the country. Curator and the brain behind Art21, Caline Chagoury, while speaking during the interactive session with media practitioners, art enthusiasts and some friends of the gallery at the Eko Hotels & Suites in Lagos, said the Art21 space "is conceived to provide a platform for renowned Nigerian and African artists to showcase their talent on a platform which makes no apology for radical, bold experimentation with the aim of commanding audience from far and wide."

Thrilled to be able to bring the Art21 platform to Lagos, she said "Amoda's art exemplifies what can be made out of supposedly trash as he welds/assembles things such as discarded nails and old locks into intricate sculptures."

Chagoury, who noted that Art21 gallery holds one of the most extensive and deepest arts collections in the country, said some of the pieces from Amoda on display are, until now, unknown to the public eyes. "Some of the works of art from the country are sending ripples to the outside world

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but globally make little discernable impact financially. This trend is set to change as the new platform joins 21st Century audiences, artists and enthusiasts who increasingly challenge this and suggested that there is need to promote and position the value of contemporary art from across Nigeria and Africa," she added.

While comparing some of the works on display to the 'drip and splash' abstractions of Jackson Pollock which sold in the art market for millions of dollars, Chagoury believes that Art21 will provide an equivalent from Nigeria and other African countries.

Offering collected works to high net worth individuals and the general public, the single-floor gallery, which contains original pieces from the artists' own collection, is expected to give a sense of both historical and cultural recognition to the creative world. "Art Twenty One (Art21) is a beautiful open space on the ground floor of the new and upcoming Eko Hotel & Suites' signature boutique hotel exuding infectious energy and passion for contemporary African, Nigerian, and Lagosian art world."

Created as an encyclopaedic gallery, Art21 was inaugurated last week at the Eko Hotels and Suites. Apart from the fact that the event was attended by creative writers, artists, culture and history lovers, it afforded the guests the opportunity to exchange ideas about African art in general.



Other beautiful works.



Amoda's works on display