



48 WALKER ST | OCT 28 - DEC 18, 2021

# Emeka Ogboh

## *Notes on Exile*

Emeka Ogboh, *Spirit and Matter*, 2017-2018, Light and sound installation composed of three photographs printed on stained-glass and mounted on lightboxes, audio (10 minutes).

James Cohan is pleased to present *Notes on Exile*, the first US gallery exhibition of work by multimedia artist Emeka Ogboh, on view at 48 Walker Street from October 30 through December 18, 2021. This exhibition marks the US premiere of Ogboh's internationally acclaimed work *The Way Earthly Things Are Going* (2017), which debuted at documenta 14.

The Nigerian-born, Berlin-based artist Emeka Ogboh's multi-sensory practice explores the transient and transportable nature of culture. Ogboh refers to the "ubiquity of sonority" as a mnemonic device, creating sound and multimedia installations that prompt collective memories of place. Likewise, the artist crafts flavors from varying regions of the world into blended gastronomic experiences, mimicking intricate narratives of migration. Ogboh's practice is rooted in synthesizing sounds found in his home country of Nigeria—such as the bustle of a Lagos marketplace and bus stop or the harmonized singing in an Igbo *ámà* (village square)—with institutions and cityscapes of the Global North. These soundscapes invite critical questions about the movement of people across the globe. While the artist uses sound as a unifying concept, Ogboh's sonographic works complicate individual ideas of identity and belonging. With a multimedia body of work ranging from the audiovisual to the gustatory, Emeka Ogboh encourages an ethico-political reflection of diaspora.

In the gallery's main space, *The Way Earthly Things Are Going* (2017) is an immersive soundscape that sets an LED strip of real-time market data from the stock indices against an ancient polyphonic Greek lamentation. Ogboh's sensory room provides a space of inescapable contemplation of the audio versus the visual, juxtaposing the interrupted lives of migrants against the never-ceasing churn of the capital market; the loss amidst the gain. With a title taken from a line in Bob Marley's well-known song "So Much Trouble in the World," this multichannel sound installation examines the disconnect between Capitalism's abstract market fluctuations and the concrete personal tragedies such peaks and valleys often induce. Though created for documenta 14 in Athens, and specifically focused on the Greek economic crisis, *The Way Earthly Things Are Going* offers a timeless interrogation of societal inequity. Recently acquired by the Tate Modern, this work was most recently exhibited during Berlin Art Week at the Zeiss Major Planetarium in September 2021.

Curator and writer Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung writes, "In *The Way Earthly Things Are Going* (2017), Ogboh, in dialogue with a traditional polyphonic choir, deliberates sonically on the multiple effects and manifestations of states of crisis. The enchanting sound installation addresses the (im-)possibility of existing in a cul-de-sac; it tells of wanderlust and yearning, of pain and a survival urge, and it features comments on and impressions of an economic crisis that has plagued and is still ravaging."

On display in the first gallery, *Spirit and Matter* (2017-18) is a wall-mounted lightbox triptych with ambient sound. The imagery comprises a kaleidoscopic arrangement of mirrored photographs of Ojuelegba, the infamous central bus station in Lagos, a major artery of movement and migration in the busy city. Reminiscent of a cathedral's stained-glass window, the simulacra of the bus driver, conductor, and bus come together to form a holy trinity of the sacred and profane. *Spirit and Matter* recontextualizes a symbolic element of Lagos life into a new visual and theoretical Afropolitan subject, allowing Ogboh to highlight critical questions about immigration, globalization, and post-colonialism.

Emeka Ogboh (b. 1977, Enugu, Nigeria) received a B.A. in Fine & Applied Arts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2001. Recently, Ogboh's *Lost Person* poster campaign was seen in Dresden's public spaces, contributing to public pressure on the German government to begin repatriation of looted Benin Bronzes from German museum collections. Other recent projects include *Stirring the Pot*, a multi-sensorial installation and exhibition at Friche la Belle de Mai in Marseilles, France (on view from June 4 through October 24, 2021); *This Too Shall Pass*, a major new commission for the EKHN Stiftung in Frankfurt, Germany (on view from July 9 through October 3, 2021); and *Song of the Union*, a new sound installation created for the Edinburgh Art Festival (on view from July 29 through August 29, 2021). *Àmà: The Gathering Place* will be installed at Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin in September, and remain on view through January 2022.

Ogboh has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including Kunstmuseum Ravensburg (2020); Cleveland Museum of Art (2019); Tate Modern, London (2017); Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2017), and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C. (2016). Ogboh has participated in numerous international exhibitions including documenta 14, Athens and Kassel (2017); Skulptur Projekte Münster, Germany (2017); 56th Biennale di Venezia, Italy (2015), and DAK'ART 2014: 11th Biennale of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal (2014). Ogboh was a 2018 finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize and received the 2019 Prize of the Sharjah Biennial 14 with Otobong Nkanga. His work is included in the public collections of institutions including Bundeskunsthalle, Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, Germany; Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Danjuma Collection, United Kingdom; Fonds d'art contemporain - Paris Collections, Paris, France; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Modern Forms, London, United Kingdom; Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C, and the Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom. Ogboh lives and works between Berlin, Germany, and Lagos, Nigeria.

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