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MAKING HISTORY AFRICAN COLLECTORS AND THE CANON OF AFRICAN ART

Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbecchie
Photographs by Kelechi Amadi-Obi

This volume of photographs and commentary brings together artworks from one of the most outstanding African-owned private collections of African art, the Femi Akinsanya African Art Collection.

The collection includes a large number of canonical artworks of Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Cross River, Benin and Benue River Valley origins. Its core artworks consist of sculptures from all major regions of Nigeria, and interesting examples of Edo/Benin bronze and brass sculptures from the late-dynastic and 20th-century interregnum periods of Benin art. The book uses the diversity, styles and originality of these artworks to evaluate the material process of formalising and interpreting an African-owned collection of African art. Publications focusing on African collectors of African art are very rare and this limits our understanding of how Africans engage indigenous art and cultural production, or questions about cultural patrimony, in their own contexts. The analysis of this unique collection provides a significant insight into an unexplored aspect of African art collections and the role and relevance of African collectors in shaping the discourse on this art.

Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbecchie is Associate Professor of Art History, University of California Santa Barbara. He has an extensive scholarly background in classical, modern, and contemporary African and African Diaspora Arts. He is the Director of *Aachron Knowledge Systems*, author of *Ben Enwonwu: The Making of an African Modernist* (winner of the 2009 Melville J. Herskovits Award), and founder and editor of *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*.