

ODYSSEY TO THE LIMCAF LEGACY EXHIBITION: THE LIFE IN MY CITY ART FESTIVAL - LIMCAF JOS REGIONAL EXHIBITION PARADIGM

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolution, structure, and cultural significance of the Life in My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) with particular focus on the Jos Regional Exhibition as a curatorial paradigm for contemporary Nigerian visual culture. Founded in 2007, LIMCAF has emerged as Nigeria's longest-running youth-centred visual arts initiative, fostering artistic development, decentralising exhibition practice, and promoting national cultural dialogue through regional and national platforms. Using historical analysis, curatorial review, participant narratives, and exhibition documentation, the study explores how the Jos regional model contributes to mentorship, artistic visibility, and community engagement within the broader LIMCAF legacy framework. The paper traces the Festival's thematic evolution, organisational processes, exhibition mounting strategies, jury procedures, catalogue production, and retrospective participant experiences. Particular attention is given to the transformative impact of regional exhibitions in nurturing emerging artists, exemplified by Paul Chibuike Emenike's emergence as the 2024 overall winner with *The Eighth Wonder*. The study further interrogates the educational and socio-cultural dimensions of LIMCAF, situating it within global discourses on exhibition-making, aesthetic education, and decentralised cultural production. While acknowledging operational challenges relating to logistics and participant welfare, the paper argues that LIMCAF remains a vital platform for artistic innovation, social reflection, and youth empowerment in Nigeria. Ultimately, the Jos Regional Exhibition demonstrates how regional art initiatives can generate nationally significant artistic narratives and sustain enduring cultural legacies within contemporary African art practice.

Keywords: LIMCAF; Regional Exhibition; Contemporary Nigerian Art; Curatorial Practice; Youth Empowerment

Introduction

The exhibition space has long functioned as a threshold where artistic intention meets public encounter, transforming private acts of creation into shared cultural experience. From prehistoric markings in caves and domestic interiors to contemporary curated platforms, visual art

exhibitions have served not merely as displays of skill but as instruments of storytelling, social critique, and collective memory. Within this continuum, exhibitions function as living archives in which ideas, identities, and values are negotiated and transmitted across time.

In contemporary practice, the notion of legacy within exhibition-making has expanded beyond the preservation of objects to encompass continuity, mentorship, community engagement, and institutional memory. Art festivals in particular have become crucial sites for this expanded understanding of legacy, offering emerging artists not only visibility but also pathways for sustained professional and intellectual growth. It is within this expanded exhibitionary framework that the Life in My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) in Nigeria situates its enduring relevance.

Founded in 2007 by Chief Robert Orji, LIMCAF has evolved into Nigeria's longest-running youth-focused visual arts initiative, engaging thousands of emerging artists across multiple regional centres, including Jos (Orji, 2007; LIMCAF Website, 2025). Its core mission, to empower young artists through exposure, competition, and critical cultural discourse, has positioned LIMCAF as a benchmark model for decentralised art festivals in Nigeria. Rather than concentrating artistic opportunity within dominant metropolitan centres, LIMCAF intentionally disperses curatorial activity across regions, fostering local revival and nationally visible creative ecosystems.

Central to LIMCAF's structure is a three-tiered selection process that begins with open national submissions, progresses through regional exhibitions, and culminates in a highly competitive national grand finale in Enugu. By 2024, annual submissions had exceeded 600 entries, from which regional showcases and a final selection of the top 100 artworks emerged for national adjudication and international exposure, including representation at platforms such as the Dakar Biennale (LIMCAF Website, 2024; Guardian Review, 26 October 2024). The impact of this model was notably affirmed during the 2024 edition themed Humanism, when Paul Chibuike Emenike, representing the Jos Region, emerged as the Overall Winner. This achievement underscored the growing artistic credibility of regional platforms (University of Jos Press Release, December 2024).

The scale and significance of LIMCAF's influence continued in 2025, with 549 artists and 735 artworks documented across eighteen regions for the theme Can We Breathe? This increasing breadth of participation reinforces scholarly observations that contemporary art festivals function as catalysts for inclusion, local identity formation, and generational creativity within national art ecologies (Nwafor, 2025; Tribune Online, 2023).

Furthermore, LIMCAF's decentralised exhibition structure aligns with curatorial models emphasised in museum and community art theory, particularly those advocating cultural humility, participatory engagement, and context-sensitive interpretation (Huang & Liem, 2022).

Focusing specifically on the Jos Regional Exhibition, this essay examines regionalism as a curatorial paradigm within LIMCAF's Legacy Exhibition framework. It traces how local curation, mentorship networks, and community mobilisation intersect with national recognition to produce enduring artistic trajectories. This odyssey, from regional selection in Jos to national convergence in Enugu, reveals not only individual artistic emergence but also a sustained institutional legacy rooted in continuity, pride of place, and collective authorship. Within these interconnections, the Jos model exemplifies how regional exhibitions contribute meaningfully to LIMCAF's evolving legacy and to the broader narrative of contemporary Nigerian visual culture.

Background

LIMCAF started in 2007 and is currently hosting the 18th edition of the Festival in 2025. What started as a modest exhibition now boasts of 18 regions participating

across Nigeria, with several more expected to join.

Established in 2007, the Life In My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) has grown into one of Nigeria's most enduring and dynamic visual art platforms, providing a space for young artists across the country to express contemporary social realities through creative dialogue. LIMCAF encourages artistic creativity and empowers aspiring young artists, male and female, including persons with disability, and was registered as a Trusteeship in 2012 under the name Life In My City Art Initiative (Nwakunor, 2024). Initially themed simply Life In My City (2007–2008), the Festival began as a celebration of urban life and artistic vitality.

As LIMCAF evolved, each subsequent edition adopted a distinctive theme that reflected Nigeria's socio-political landscape and the existential musings of its youth. In 2009, *Nigeria the Beautiful* foregrounded national pride, while 2010's *Nigeria @ 50* commemorated the country's golden jubilee. By 2011, *Horizon of Hope* signalled a vision of optimism amidst uncertainty, and 2012's *Being Young* offered introspection on youth identity and aspirations.

From 2013's *Out of the Frame, Out of the Box*, 2014's *Less is More*, to 2015's *Beyond All Odds*, LIMCAF encouraged bold experimentation and resilience. *Riches from Within* in 2016 echoed the vitality of creative intuition; 2017's *In The Midst of Realities* re-engaged artists with the pressing truths of their environment; and 2018's *Twilight* was a reflection on transition and liminality.

The Other Side (2019) and *Vision 2020: So Far, So What?* (2020/21) interrogated national progress and unfulfilled promises.

The post-pandemic themes, such as *Paradox of Muted Echoes* (2022), *Fix It* (2023), and *Humanism* (2024), highlighted voices silenced by crisis and the call for empathy-driven change. The 2025 theme, *Can We Breathe?*, resonates with global and local outcries for justice, environmental urgency, and the right to exist with dignity.

LIMCAF's thematic trajectory not only mirrors Nigeria's socio-political shifts but also positions it as a critical space for reflective and transformative contemporary art in West Africa.

Table 1. Chronicle of the Years and Themes for Life in My City Art Festival

s/no	YEAR	THEME
1	2007	Life In My City
2	2008	Life In My City
3	2009	Nigeria, the Beautiful.
4	2010	Nigeria @50
5	2011	Horizon of Hope
6	2012	Being Young
7	2013	Out of The Frame, Out of The Box
8	2014	Less is More
9	2015	Beyond All Odds
10	2016	Riches from Within
11	2017	In The Midst of Realities
12	2018	Twilight
13	2019	The Other Side
14	2020/2021	Vision 2020: So far, So What?
15	2022	Paradox Of Muted Echoes
16	2023	Fix It
17	2024	Humanism
18	2025	Can we breathe?

A Legacy of Vision and Resilience

Over nearly two decades, the Life in My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) has cultivated a rich and diverse legacy of emerging Nigerian artists who have used the platform to engage national narratives, personal identities, and societal urgencies. From the hyperreal elegance of Olumide Oresegun in 2007 to the layered socio-political metaphors in Ijiko Kelvin

Mathew's 2024 *Decayed Decades*, LIMCAF has consistently revealed the creative pulse of Nigeria's next generation of cultural thinkers.

Each overall winner exemplifies not just technical merit but also a profound resonance with the annual theme, whether through sculptural innovation, mixed media storytelling, or intimate drawing. Works like Afegbua Ibrahim's *Facing the*

Giants and Ejiofor Samson's *Cold Mineral, Cold Pure water* transcend aesthetics, offering tactile and conceptual critiques of contemporary Nigerian life.

The trajectory of these winners testifies to LIMCAF's unwavering commitment to decentralising art practice, expanding

regional access, and celebrating fresh voices in visual culture. From Jos to Enugu, the Festival's layered curatorial model continues to empower, provoke, and archive the story of Nigeria through the eyes of its most daring young artists.

Table 2. Past Overall Winners of LIMCAF 2007 - 202

S/NO	Year	Artist	Title/Work	Medium
1	2007	Olumide Oresegun	<i>Life in My City (Lagos)</i>	Painting
2	2008	Maduka Chukwuma	<i>The Bitter Embrace</i>	Sculpture
3	2009	Ezah Lucky	<i>Beautiful Nigerian</i>	Sculpture
4	2010	Samuel Palmtree	<i>Pentagonal Decade</i>	Sculpture/ Installation
5	2011	Eyo Emem Effiong	<i>Save the Child and Save the Nation</i>	Sculpture
6	2012	Eze Mariagoretti Chinenye	<i>Rejuvenation</i>	Painting/Photography
7	2013	Eghosa Henry Osaretin	<i>Fragments of Unity</i>	Painting
8	2014	Ngozi Omeje	<i>Placenter</i>	Ceramic Installation
9	2015	Aisien Harrison	<i>Melodious Struggle</i>	Sculpture
10	2016	Ezennia Onyinyechi	<i>Bleeding Rose</i>	Mixed Media
11	2017	Afegbua Ibrahim	<i>Facing the Giants (Binding Wire)</i>	Sculpture
12	2018	Ifedili Chibuike	<i>Enigma</i>	Installation
13	2019	Olaoye Victor	<i>Angels Among Gods</i>	Drawing
14	2020	[No festival held due to COVID-19]	,	,
15	2021	Okoronta Chichetam John	<i>Smudged Vision</i>	Charcoal on Paper
16	2022	Ejiofor Samson	<i>Cold Mineral, Cold Purewater</i>	Wood Installation
17	2023	Ijiko Kelvin Mathew	<i>Decayed Decades</i>	Pyrography
18	2024	Paul Chibuike Emenike	<i>The Eighth Wonder</i>	Mixed Media on Paper
19	2025	Segun Victor Owolabi.	<i>Entanglement: Sad Generation with Happy Faces.</i>	Threads painting on boards

The evolution of art exhibitions as public institutions for cultural education, social engagement, and artistic development is well documented in global art-historical discourse. Art exhibitions function not

only as platforms for artistic display but also as instruments of aesthetic education, national identity formation, and civic discourse (Zhong & Hu, 2023). Within the Nigerian context, the *Life in My City Art*

Festival (LIMCAF) presents a paradigmatic case of how art festivals decentralise cultural production and foster youth empowerment, particularly through regional exhibitions such as those in Jos and other regions in Nigeria.

According to Zhong and Hu (2023), the emergence of modern art exhibitions in the Republic of China marked a shift from elite aesthetic privilege to democratised cultural experience, effectively popularising public taste and stimulating national artistic consciousness. The authors document how exhibitions transitioned through several stages, from elite-led “painting fairs” to full-scale national showcases used for patriotic mobilisation and public enlightenment. These exhibitions grew into significant tools of social and aesthetic education, designed to integrate traditional and modern values and to reflect societal transformation.

A similar trajectory can be observed in LIMCAF’s model. Founded in 2007, LIMCAF has evolved into Nigeria’s largest youth visual arts platform, targeting artists aged 18–35. By conducting regional exhibitions in multiple zones (including Jos, Zaria, and Port Harcourt), the Festival mirrors what Zhong and Hu identify as the localisation of art pedagogy through exhibitionary practices. These regional

nodes offer emerging artists opportunities for exposure, feedback, and professional growth outside the typical metropolitan art circuits of Lagos and Abuja.

Notably, the Jos Regional Exhibition functions as a space for artistic emergence and community mobilisation, showcasing diverse works that span digital media, installation, painting, and sculpture. LIMCAF’s framework reflects what Cai Yuanpei described as “aesthetic education instead of religion,” where the cultivation of taste and civic morality occurs through art (Liu, 2020). Through workshops, critiques, and curated presentations, LIMCAF ensures that visual culture becomes a conduit for social reflection and civic responsibility.

Moreover, during wartime in China (1937–1945), exhibitions were used as tools of national resilience and identity affirmation, an idea echoed in LIMCAF’s 2024 theme, *Humanism*, which encouraged artists to reflect on shared humanity, resilience, and compassion in a post-pandemic society. Like the patriotic exhibitions of the Republic era, which fostered a unified front against imperial aggression (Zhu, 2017), LIMCAF’s thematically charged exhibitions have become avenues for confronting Nigeria’s contemporary realities, from socio-

political unrest to mental health and youth empowerment.

Hence, LIMCAF's exhibition model parallels both the educational and societal dimensions of historical exhibition systems described by Zhong and Hu (2023). The Jos exhibition, in particular, not only curates artistic talent but also activates regional voices in a broader national dialogue. This reflects a decentralised model of cultural power, echoing the Republic of China's move from centralised, elite art practices to regionally inclusive, socially driven exhibition formats.

The Genesis of LIMCAF Jos Region: A Catalyst for Artistic Growth

The LIMCAF Jos Region chapter was inaugurated following Jacob Onoja's participation in the 2023 LIMCAF national jury. Inspired by the creative vitality he witnessed in Enugu, Onoja spearheaded the first regional LIMCAF exhibition, held from 15th to 19th July 2024, in collaboration with the University of Jos's Fine and Applied Arts department. This initiative yielded the 2024 overall winner, Mr Paul Emenike. Notably, nurturing young talent at the regional level can have a profound impact on the artistic development of individual artists. The idea, sparked by Onoja's attendance at the 2023 LIMCAF exhibition, has rapidly

gained momentum, transforming the visual arts landscape in Jos and beyond. Currently, the Jos region boasts a large followership and mentorship programme from inception to date. This social cohesion helps to build a vibrant visual arts hub through the long-standing regional exhibitions legacy of LIMCAF.



Plate I: Highlights of the Maiden Jos Regional Exhibition and the Grand Finale 2024.

Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase of each LIMCAF cycle marks a critical juncture in shaping the conceptual and operational trajectory of the entire festival year. This phase typically begins shortly after the grand finale of the previous edition, often a full year in advance, and involves a series of strategic brainstorming sessions among the LIMCAF Board, core stakeholders, and regional coordinators across Nigeria. These discussions are not perfunctory; rather, they constitute rigorous intellectual exchanges in which thematic directions for

the upcoming edition are debated, refined, and ultimately consolidated through a process of consensus.

The selection of the annual theme is a pivotal moment in this phase. Far from being arbitrary, each theme undergoes rounds of collective scrutiny and critical reflection to ensure it reflects not only the current socio-cultural zeitgeist but also the philosophical aspirations of the LIMCAF project. For instance, themes such as “*Humanism*” (2024), “*Fix It*” (2023), and “*Paradox of Muted Echoes*” (2022) are the products of thematic deliberations intended to provoke thought, inspire innovation, and prompt diverse interpretations among participating artists. The chosen theme serves as the conceptual springboard for all subsequent programming, shaping artists’ responses and curatorial decisions at both the regional and national levels.

Once a theme is finalised, LIMCAF’s communication team rolls out a unified design template in the form of posters, digital assets, and call-for-entry materials. These are disseminated widely across multiple online platforms, social media channels, institutional networks, and the official LIMCAF website. The early circulation of the theme and poster ensures ample preparation time for artists to conceptualise their works in alignment

with the Festival's intellectual and aesthetic thrust.

Concurrently, the LIMCAF Secretariat intensifies coordination with its network of regional coordinators. These coordinators are integral to the operationalisation of the theme at the grassroots level through the regional workshops and exhibitions. Regular planning meetings, both virtual and physical, are convened to develop region-specific strategies for artists’ workshops, seminars, and public engagements. These pre-exhibition interactions are not merely logistical; they function as critical spaces for capacity building, where young artists are introduced to contemporary debates in art, ethics of exhibition-making, and thematic conceptualisation.

In preparation for the regional exhibitions, coordinators are tasked with securing appropriate venues, often in collaboration with academic institutions, galleries, cultural centres, or community spaces. The success of the regional exhibitions hinges not only on the artists’ submissions but also on careful planning around infrastructure, lighting, transport, security, and hospitality. Moreover, coordinators engage with local sponsors and patrons, individuals, art foundations, embassies, and businesses, who provide the financial and logistical support necessary to

augment funding from the LIMCAF Foundation. This public-private synergy reinforces the decentralised model that has made LIMCAF a sustainable and scalable project across Nigeria.

Importantly, the preparatory phase also includes strategic outreach to content creators, media platforms, and influencers, especially those attuned to the art ecosystem in each host city. This media engagement is designed to build public awareness, generate anticipation, and increase participation among emerging creatives. In cities like Jos, where the art market is still in its formative stages, such visibility helps galvanise interest, establish networks, and showcase the regional contribution to the national art scene.

Thus, the preparatory phase is not a background task but the Architectural Foundation upon which LIMCAF is built each year. It embodies the Festival's ethos of inclusion, mentorship, decentralisation, and cultural development, ensuring that each region, regardless of its infrastructural limitations, has a seat at the national table of Nigerian contemporary art.

Setting Up: Mounting the Vision

The process of setting up for the LIMCAF Jos Regional Exhibition at the Magnet Café was as demanding as it was transformative. Mounting artworks is not

merely a matter of physical placement; it is an intellectually rigorous and logistically intensive exercise that demands careful planning, spatial awareness, and aesthetic sensitivity. Each piece presented by the artists carried its own unique language, whether in painting, sculpture, mixed media, or installation, and thus required an equally nuanced approach to display.

Understanding the nature and technical requirements of each artwork was the first crucial step. This involved assessing the genre of expression, the visual weight of the piece, the fragility or robustness of materials used, and the conceptual tone each artist intended to convey. These elements collectively informed curatorial decisions about positioning, height, lighting, spacing, and sequencing. Works with quieter tones or minimalist forms, for instance, were juxtaposed against more vibrant or large-scale expressions to achieve a dynamic yet coherent visual flow throughout the exhibition space.

The use of professional power tools, drills, industrial adhesives, and customised mounting brackets was essential in safely and effectively installing the artworks, particularly those that were heavy, unconventional in shape, or multi-dimensional. The Magnet Café's spatial layout was both a challenge and an opportunity; its open-plan design with

varying wall surfaces and ambient lighting conditions demanded flexibility and innovation in display techniques. Large works required strategic wall selection, while smaller or more intricate pieces were given isolated visual space to allow closer inspection by viewers.

Ultimately, the process of setting up was a collaborative undertaking that brought together curators, technicians, artists, and volunteers. It was a careful balancing act of vision and practicality, leading to an exhibition that was not only visually compelling but also professionally executed, an embodiment of the standard LIMCAF strives to uphold across its regional platforms.

Exhibition Opening: A Celebration of Art and Community

The official opening of the LIMCAF Jos Regional Exhibition 2025 was held on Monday, 23rd June, and extended through Saturday, 28th June, at the renowned Magnet Café, situated at Plot 50973, Rayfield-Zarmaganda Road, Jos, Plateau State. This event marked a significant cultural moment in the city's contemporary art calendar, positioning Jos as a vibrant contributor to the national LIMCAF narrative.

The exhibition was formally declared open by **Mr. Ezekiel Udubrae**, a distinguished veteran artist and Vice President (North

Central) of the **Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA)**. His presence underscored the relevance of LIMCAF as a professional platform that not only showcases emerging talent but also honours established voices within the Nigerian visual arts sector. In attendance were a host of dignitaries: government functionaries, academic Professors, leaders of the creative industry, members of the press, art educators, collectors, and the general public.

The Magnet Café was transformed into a dynamic visual cultural space through deliberate and refined curatorial planning. Upon entrance, visitors were welcomed into a well-arranged and thematically coherent exhibition, where artworks were thoughtfully mounted to engage the public both visually and intellectually. The atmosphere was festive, charged with laughter, curiosity, networking, and animated conversations. Guests moved freely between artworks and artists, exchanging insights and sparking new creative connections.



Plate II: The exhibition venue.

Throughout the morning, the exhibition venue became a microcosm of Jos's artistic vitality. Music, photography, media coverage, and impromptu critiques layered the experience with additional dimensions. The event also reinforced Jos's status as the "Home of Peace and Tourism", where cultural expression, hospitality, and artistic excellence converge seamlessly. The opening not only inaugurated an exhibition but also inaugurated a renewed spirit of artistic engagement in the region, affirming LIMCAF's growing legacy in Jos.



Plate III: A cross-section of some of the participating Artists in 2025.
E-Catalogue and Data Collection:
Archiving the Experience



The production of both the soft and hard copies of the Jos Regional Exhibition

Catalogue introduced a significant educational and professional dimension to the LIMCAF experience in 2025. Beyond serving as a commemorative record of the participating artists and their works, the catalogue functioned as a critical curatorial document, anchoring the exhibition thematically and visually within the broader LIMCAF framework.

The e-catalogue, in particular, enabled wider digital access to the exhibition content, extending the reach of the artworks to audiences beyond the physical confines of the Magnet Café. With high-resolution images, artist statements, curatorial essays, and biographical entries, the digital publication became a pedagogical tool not only for art lovers but also for researchers, educators, and prospective collectors. It provided a clear map of the regional art ecosystem in Jos, profiling emerging talent and showcasing their engagement with the Festival's theme, *Can We Breathe?*. Furthermore, the interactive design of the digital edition fostered user-friendly navigation, making it accessible for use in academic presentations, public talks, and online dissemination.

In tandem with the catalogue production, the systematic collection of data was implemented during the exhibition. This included participant demographics,

number of entries submitted, medium and genre breakdowns, attendance figures, feedback forms, and visitor engagement metrics. This data proved vital for multiple purposes: from evaluating the regional impact of LIMCAF in Jos to identifying trends in artistic responses to the theme and guiding future logistical planning.

Importantly, the data also provided cultural planners and city stakeholders with insights into how contemporary art can mediate public discourse around identity, empathy, and civic consciousness in Jos. In this regard, the Jos exhibition not only archived artistic expressions but also generated data-driven narratives that may influence policy, education, and community-based art interventions in the future.

Jury Session and Decision

A day after the opening ceremony, a team of 5 Jurors consisting of Prof. John Oyedemi (Chairman of the Panel), Prof. Lasisi Lamidi, Dr. Jacob Onoja, Miss Judith Daadut and Mr. Mark Rwang (Chairman, Society of Nigerian Artists, Plateau State Chapter) were all present to pick the best of the best from the various categories of works presented (See Plate IV). The regional coordinator gave a brief on the set criteria for judging the works and the selection of the 9 participants from the region.



Plate IV: Jos Region Jury members and some engagements

At the end of the rigorous process from the highly competitive works, the choices were clear and ready for presentation to the awaiting audience at the closing ceremony and onward transmission to the LIMCAF secretariat.

From the Jury decisions, some honorary mentions include:

PAINTING/MIXED MEDIA

1. *Silent Outcry* - Jesse Bature
2. *Burning Desire* - Nelson Wilfred Dogo

SCULPTURE / INSTALLATION ART

1. *Chocked* – Gideon Knight
2. *Liberation of the lost* – Paul Kirwe
3. *Colony of Unity* – Omashi Kelvin Andrew

CERAMICS

1. *Let me* – Stephanie Tallen

GRAPHICS/DIGITAL ART VIDEO

1. *Yes, we can* -Favour Emmanuel Naandokol

2. *Fathers Before Me* – Wakrot
Chinshaka

PHOTOGRAPHY

1. *Minimum Wage Maximum Rage* –
Egbogu Onyedikachukwu

TEXTILE ART / FASHION DESIGN

1. *Joy is Coming* – Oluchi Livinus

DRAWING

1. *Can we Breathe* – Idoko
Lordthanks
2. *20.10.20* – Gabriel Adefemi
Adetona

The 9 selected participants to attend the grand finale across the various media are:

PAINTING/MIXED MEDIA

1. *Can we breathe* - Timothy Dakas
2. *Wrong Currency* – Bat’armwa Naomi
Gobum
3. *Since 1960* – David Chizoba Nwadike

SCULPTURE / INSTALLATION ART

1. *Toxic Ignorance* – Plangji Ishaya

CERAMICS

Nil

GRAPHICS/DIGITAL ART VIDEO

1. *Voices Unheard* – Ipa Anyaole

PHOTOGRAPHY

1. *Breathless Pursuit I & II* – David
Imoleayo Alao

TEXTILE ART / FASHION DESIGN

1. *Breathe in Power* – Justina
Chinemerem Nmeribe

DRAWING

1. *Here We Are* - Davou Mafeng
2. *Beacon of Hope in a World of Conflict*
– Danjuma Sumdi

The selected 9 artworks will feature in the grand finale in October 2025 in Enugu.

Retrospective Participants’ Reports of LIMCAF 2024 Grand Finale

The Life in My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) 2024, themed *Humanism*, featured a grand finale that brought together 105 young visual artists from across Nigeria. Among them were eight finalists and one upcoming curator as observer from the Jos Region, whose participation not only highlighted the region's growing artistic talent but also provided a critical insight into the structure, impact, and reception of the LIMCAF experience. The following narratives, presented in summarised form, reflect individual participant experiences, observations, and assessments of the Festival held from 19–26 October 2024 at the Institute of Management Technology (IMT) Conference Centre, Enugu.

Paul Chibuikie Emenike, who emerged as the overall national winner, recounts a journey marked by camaraderie, cultural immersion, and artistic affirmation. From the well-organised departure in Jos to accommodation in Enugu and engagement with exhibitions and lectures, his experience underscored the Festival's

professionalism. Emenike's reflections highlight LIMCAF as a transformative platform for visibility and creative growth.

Stanley Ezea focused on the quality of hospitality provided by the organisers, noting the comfortable accommodations and thoughtfully arranged meals, which enabled meaningful artistic networking. The exhibition, in his view, offered an expansive redefinition of artistic practice and inspiration.

Livinus Oluchi Vanessa (The only female artist in the team) provided a chronological account of events, including visits to the IMT Fine and Applied Arts Department, Unity Park, and the Bona Art Gallery. She praised the diversity of artworks and cultural content, describing the award night as vibrant and fulfilling.

Jesse Bature, a sculptor, placed emphasis on peer engagement and exposure to new ideas during the exhibition and excursions. However, he noted challenges such as limited transportation and sparse programme structuring. Nevertheless, he valued the platform as a space for visibility and self-discovery.

Nathaniel David Gungret acknowledged the eye-opening and empowering nature of LIMCAF but raised concerns about disorganised gallery tours, inconsistent punctuality, and unfulfilled logistical

commitments such as transport and feeding support.

Dang Kingsley Cleofas, a first-time participant, expressed gratitude for the opportunity but echoed logistical concerns. He cited delays, unmet conditions of support, and weak time management as areas requiring attention. Despite these, he affirmed LIMCAF's value in expanding his understanding of Nigeria's visual art terrain.

Remchin Rinfwang (Vigs) offered a detailed multi-day account of the Jos delegation's journey, activities, and reflections. From engaging sculpture tours and gallery visits to the lively award gala, his report affirmed the Festival's educational and social impact. Yet, like others, he pointed out shortcomings in funding disbursement and logistics.

Gabriel Adetona served as the team lead. His unique style of drawing and matured demeanour set him apart as a thriving creative. His experiences reflect the general notion of others; however, he enjoyed the synergies developed with the artists from the other regions.

Awin Daniel, attending as an observer, documented the learning outcomes from exhibitions and lectures. He was particularly impressed by the depth of artistic interpretations of *Humanism* and stressed the need for better time

management and logistical planning by the organisers.

Peace Isama, a final-year Mass Communication student at the University of Jos and winner of the Digital Arts category at the LIMCAF 2025 competition, recounts her journey as one of unexpected opportunity, growth, and self-discovery. Initially, her involvement with LIMCAF was centered around creating promotional videos, so when her mentor, Dr. Jacob Onoja, encouraged her to participate, she assumed it was another advertisement project. To her surprise, she was instead asked to submit an entry for the competition, marking the beginning of a transformative journey.

Inspired by the competition theme, “Can We Breathe?” she reflected deeply on its meaning and searched for a suitable creative angle. Drawing from her personal writings, she rediscovered an old poem that aligned with the theme, refined it with additions and edits, and eventually transformed it into a video project. Despite preparing at the last minute, she remained committed and gave her best effort.

Her work earned a place among the top nine entries in Jos, which granted her an opportunity to travel to Enugu for the next stage of the competition. There, against stronger competition, her work emerged as

the winning entry in the Digital Arts category.

Beyond the award itself, the process taught her patience, persistence, and confidence in her creative abilities. The intense process of refining her script and creating under pressure revealed strengths she had never recognised within herself. The LIMCAF experience also expanded her perspective, challenging her fears and limitations. Inspired by the boldness and dedication of fellow young creatives, she experienced a profound awakening. She describes the journey not simply as a competition but as a process of becoming an experience that affirmed her potential and strengthened her determination to pursue greater possibilities in life and creativity.

Collectively, these reports reveal a recurring duality in the LIMCAF experience: on one hand, a vibrant and inspiring national platform for artistic exposure and professional development from the regional level; on the other, significant operational challenges, particularly regarding transport, accommodation logistics, and event scheduling. Nonetheless, the artists expressed deep appreciation for the Festival's commitment to creative empowerment.

The Jos region's representation, culminating in a national prizewinner, underscores the potency of regional talent and the necessity for sustained support. These narratives provide important qualitative data for evaluating LIMCAF's organisational efficacy and impact on emerging artists.

In Nigeria.

Review of “The Eighth Wonder Artwork: My LIMCAF Story” by Paul Chibuike Emenike



Plate V: Paul Chibuike Emenike, *The Eighth Wonder*, 2024. Image Source: Artist

Paul Emenike's reflective narrative, "*The Eighth Wonder Artwork: My LIMCAF Story*," offers a richly layered and emotionally resonant testimony that transcends a mere documentation of participation. Rather, it becomes a personal manifesto of perseverance, faith, and creative evolution. Structured as a blend of memoir, artist statement, and homage, the piece is both compelling and instructive (Onoja, 2025).

The narrative opens with a confessional tone, tracing the artist's dream of participating in LIMCAF back to his formative years. Emenike's recollection of his 2022 debut as a Top 100 finalist reveals a transformative encounter with Nigeria's broader art community. His vivid descriptions of his first LIMCAF experience, its structure, ambience, and influence, function as an important backdrop for understanding his later success. What stands out here is the interplay of faith and artistic growth, elements that underscore the spiritual and existential dimensions of his creative journey.

Emenike's discourse on *The Eighth Wonder*, the work that won him the 2024 grand prize, is philosophically grounded and aesthetically detailed. Rooted in humanist ideology, the piece emerges from a profound personal vision, a moment of divine inspiration on a tricycle ride, which he interprets as a metaphorical awakening. The conceptual framework, that "humanity is the eighth wonder," is artistically ambitious and emotionally rich. His reference to the psychological complexity of human experiences, *hope, pain, joy, anxiety, and peace* situates the work within both contemporary existential discourse and a pan-African visual language.

Technically, the artist's multimedia methodology, spanning pyrography, fabric collage, newspaper print, and ink, demonstrates a mature command of materials. The Ndidì technique (Igbo for "patience"), as both philosophy and process, becomes central to his practice. The cumulative nature of the work, eight framed panels created across four years, echoes the slow, deliberate craft that defies instant gratification, a metaphor for personal and cultural endurance.

Beyond the personal, Emenike's account also functions as a powerful testimonial to the transformative potential of LIMCAF as an institution. His emphasis on the significance of regional exhibitions, particularly the 2024 Jos Region edition, coordinated by Dr. Jacob Onoja, provides valuable insight into LIMCAF's decentralisation efforts. He situates Jos as a budding hub of creative synergy and professional exposure, highlighting its underrepresented yet vibrant art scene.

Furthermore, the narrative reveals the importance of regional structures in Nigeria's art ecology. Emenike's sense of loyalty to the Jos region, despite previously exhibiting in Abuja, underscores a key curatorial shift: the relevance of creating localised platforms that can compete in quality and prestige with major urban centres.

Recurring through the narrative is a deep spiritual anchor. Emenike frames his creative calling as a divine vocation, invoking not just personal belief but also a theological view of inspiration and authorship. His gratitude to mentors, peers, and LIMCAF as an enabling institution presents a vision of success that is communally achieved.

The narrative concludes with humility and vision, cementing the idea that LIMCAF is not just a competition but a cradle of future legacies in Nigerian art. His mention of peers by name, including the rest of the Jos regional team, reflects a collective ethos that aligns with LIMCAF's goal of nurturing a connected and empowered generation of artists.

Paul Emenike's essay offers more than a retrospective; it is an artefact of process, growth, and visionary insight. From a curatorial perspective, his journey affirms the power of regional festivals to act as sites of artistic pilgrimage and renewal. The richness of his personal reflections and his meticulous exploration of *The Eighth Wonder* render the work a fitting emblem for LIMCAF 2024's theme of *Humanism*. The piece, with its spiritual resonance and pan-African materiality, positions Emenike as not only a participant but as a voice of his generation, an artist-curator of self and society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Life in My City Art Festival (LIMCAF) stands as a cultural phenomenon that redefines the possibilities of youth-focused art initiatives in Nigeria. Through its regional exhibitions and grand national finale, it has sustained a robust and inclusive platform for emerging voices, decentralising the art ecosystem and cultivating a new generation of socially conscious visual artists. The Jos Regional Exhibition, in particular, exemplifies how local contexts can produce narratives with national impact, offering a curatorial model rooted in mentorship, community participation, and professional rigour.

This odyssey, from conceptual preparation, exhibition mounting, and digital archiving to national recognition, demonstrates the strength of LIMCAF's decentralised curatorial framework. It reveals that when young artists are given the tools, visibility, and institutional support, they rise not only to exhibit but to engage, critique, and transform. The example of Paul Chibuike Emenike, a Jos participant who emerged as the 2024 overall winner, powerfully affirms this model.

However, this study also surfaces operational gaps that require urgent attention, namely, logistical inefficiencies,

communication breakdowns, and inconsistent support for participants. If LIMCAF is to maintain its trajectory of excellence and equity, it must adopt strategic reforms in planning and execution, particularly around transportation, accommodation, and documentation protocols at the grand finale.

Recommendations:

1. **Strengthen Logistics and Participant Welfare:** LIMCAF should create a standardised logistical protocol to ensure timely transportation, adequate feeding, and appropriate accommodation for all regional representatives.
2. **Expand Regional Support Structures:** Empower regional coordinators with more financial and institutional backing to organise workshops, media outreach, and artist development sessions.
3. **Develop a National Curatorial Training Framework:** Implement a yearly programme that trains young curators across regions in exhibition design, writing, and public engagement, building local curatorial capacity.
4. **Institutionalise Data Collection and Impact Assessment:** Expand

the use of catalogues, visitor feedback forms, and digital analytics to document audience engagement and guide long-term planning.

5. **Foster More International Collaborations:**Leverage

LIMCAF's growing legacy to partner with global art festivals, residency programmes, and academic institutions, thereby giving artists greater exposure and fostering cross-cultural dialogue.

In conclusion, **LIMCAF's Jos paradigm** is not merely a regional showcase but a

crucible of innovation, resilience, and vision that has led to the legacy exhibition. It affirms the power of art to mirror and mould society and highlights the importance of sustained institutional investment in youth, culture, and community. As LIMCAF approaches its third decade, its legacy will be measured not just by its past winners but also by its commitment to continuous improvement, cultural equity, and the flourishing of artistic futures in every corner of Nigeria.

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