

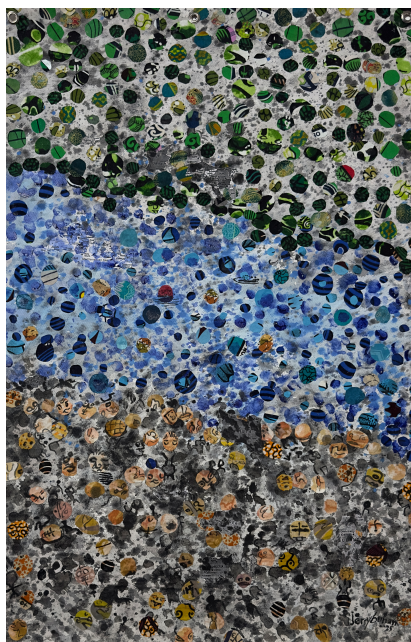
PRESS RELEASE

Jerry Buhari: *Jápa*

May 8 - June 7, PV: May 7, 6-8pm

Ed Cross

19 Garrett Street, EC1Y 0TY



Dream of green lands across the sea, Jápa series, 2024

Ed Cross is delighted to present *Jápa*, a solo exhibition by Professor Jerry Buhari. This series is a meditation on migration and endurance, set against the backdrop of Buhari's reflections on his personal history, the future of his family, and a national zeitgeist of movement in post-colonial Nigeria.

Jápa, derived from the Yorùbá word meaning "to flee" or "to escape," has evolved into a widely used slang term in Nigeria, especially among younger generations. *Jápa* signifies the desire of Nigerians to leave behind oppressive conditions in search of "greener pastures" through new opportunities abroad. Buhari reflects on this phenomenon not as a passing moment, but as part of a larger history of dislocation and search for freedom. Through the *Jápa* series, Buhari interrogates migration as a markedly political yet deeply complex emotional and physical phenomenon. For Buhari, his paintings are "multi-layered texts...in one sense, the journals of a migrant", writes Ayò Akínwándé in the essay that accompanies the exhibition.

In the main gallery space hangs ten textile works which extend Buhari's exploration of migration into the realm of symbolism and cartography. These pieces feature clusters of circular scrap fabrics in brown, blue, and green, representing fleeing Africans, the precarious Mediterranean Sea and Europe/North America, respectively. The textile works, created through a meticulous process of dyeing, stitching, and layering, evoke, as Ayò Akínwándé writes, "a symbolic journey through layered geographies".

In the two large-scale textile works: *Jápa as explorers* (2025) and *We are all Jápa* (2025), Buhari reimagines the migrant as an explorer, a navigator who experiences *jápa* not just as a rupture but a process of redefinition, embarking on a journey filled with uncertainty and hope.

In addition to the textile series are fourteen miniature works on paper. These pieces - grouped into the sub-series *Personal landscape I–VI* (2024), *In the valley of decision I–III* (2024), and *Migrant's dream of green lands I–V* (2024) - reflect an intimate approach to the theme of *Jápa*, capturing Buhari's own internal struggles with his children's potential flight from Nigeria as part of his meditations on migration. These small scale works invite close viewing, where the audience is encouraged to ask: "What does it mean to move - voluntarily or otherwise".

Jápa is a contemporary meditation on experiences that have long been part of the human condition. Buhari constructs a visual lexicon of departure: fractured space and motifs of dislocation. The sense of motion throughout the works is tense and ambivalent. The artist encourages the viewer to consider the narrative elements of *Jápa* and in doing so, reveals the sinuous stories of migration in the West African context, where both the artist and his subjects navigate the complex inner landscapes of disillusionment and new horizons.

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Professor Jerry Buhari (b. 1959, Kaduna State, Nigeria) is a respected artist and arts educator whose practice spans painting, installation, and environmental art. He studied at the Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he now serves as a professor. Over the course of his career, Buhari has exhibited widely, displaying work which explores themes of memory, politics, and environmental consciousness, often drawing on Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape.

Buhari has received numerous awards and fellowships, including from the Commonwealth Foundation, the Japan Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Triangle Trust and Vermont Studio Centre. He is a Fellow of the Society of Nigerian Artists and has been listed in "Who is Who in Nigerian Art." He has held visiting professorships and lectureships at institutions such as Princeton University, Savannah College of Art and Design, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He also serves as an advisor to Arthouse Contemporary and curated their landmark exhibition on the Zaria Art Society in 2019.

Selected solo exhibitions include *Landscapes of the Soul*, Kó, Lagos (2022); *Jerry Buhari*, Kó, Lagos (2021); *Framed Images of Time and Memories*, Thought Pyramid Art Centre Wuse, Abuja (2017); *Jerry Buhari in Retrospection: 33 Years +*, Kashmiri Ibrahim Library and Department of Fine Arts Gallery, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (2015) and *Encounters & Dialogues*, Artspring Gallery, Kansas (2008). Selected group exhibitions include *Art Dubai*, Gallery Harare in partnership with Kó, Dubai (2023); *IN A POT OF HOT SOUP*, Brunei Gallery, London (2022); *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa*, Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles (2014) and *Àsikò: Evoking Personal Narratives and Collective History*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (2013). In 2022, Buhari exhibited and delivered the keynote speech at *ArtoP: The Visual Articulation of Politics* at the Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.