

***Perilous journeys:
reflection on migration***

Featuring new works by Enotie Ogbemor

27 July 2023 – 24 September 2023

Room 3

Free

Supported by The Asahi Shimbun

Press images: <http://bit.ly/3OvJG9I>

A new display reflecting on the loss of people and culture through the lens of human trafficking and unsafe migration, opens today at the British Museum.

The Asahi Shimbun Display *Perilous journeys* in Room 3 from today until 24 September 2023 features visually compelling new works by Nigerian artist, Enotie Ogbemor and Mexican artist, Betsabeé Romero.

This display will focus, in part, on Edo State in Nigeria which has recorded an extremely high number of migrants. Many of these migrants have become the targets of trafficking gangs, some losing their lives while making journeys across the Sahara desert and Mediterranean Sea. As well as Nigeria, the exhibition will explore the response to migration on the American continent and consider how this relates to the experiences of migrants elsewhere in the world.

Enotie Ogbemor, a multi-disciplinary artist based in Benin City, has created a large-scale painting, inspired by contemporary migrations from Edo State, highlighting the personal tragedies involved in human trafficking.

Also on display is a recently-cast brass sculpture, drawing on iconic images popularly associated with Queen Mother Idia from the historic Kingdom of Benin. It also refers to the British military expedition against Benin City in 1897, the lives lost and the wider associated human tragedy, including the looting of objects from the royal palaces. This piece will draw attention to the consequent loss of cultural knowledge that Enotie, who is actively engaged in current debates around the repatriation of objects from the Kingdom of Benin, believes has contributed to the current migrant crisis being experienced in Edo State.

These pieces will be juxtaposed with a powerful work by Mexican artist Betsabeé Romero who frequently uses discarded bus tyres as her canvas. Elevated through carved and gilded figures that reflect on controversial responses to migration on the American continent, this installation aims to represent the humanity and dignity of migrants globally.

Enotie Ogbemor, artist, said: “Cultural disconnection can be caused by external factors such as globalisation and technological advancements, while in other cases, it may result from internal conflicts and pressures within a society. It is important to understand the historical and cultural context that has led to the current situation. This

may involve examining the traditional practices, values, and beliefs of a society, as well as the factors that have contributed to their erosion or transformation over time.

By understanding the root causes of cultural disconnection, we can develop strategies to preserve and revitalise cultural traditions and practices, while also promoting positive change and progress.”

Betsabeé Romero, artist, said: “Migration is part of the fear that many politicians sell all over the world to become powerful. Migration is a fundamental part of this global world where, unfortunately, the richness and quality of life is extremely concentrated, provoking the most enormous social differences I have ever seen.

People are forced to leave their countries for many reasons. Nobody wants to be a migrant and live all the horrors that it entails. Unfortunately, human beings have been forced to leave their land, their family, their life, since the beginning of history. Our small individual life is a migrating path between life and death.”

Hartwig Fischer, Director, The British Museum, said: “*Perilous journeys* explores themes of migration from Nigeria and Mexico, a topic that will resonate with many across the world. It is our pleasure to be able to showcase new works by Enotie Ogbemor alongside art by Betsabeé Romero and we thank them both for making this exhibition possible.”

Notes to editors

The Asahi Shimbun Display Perilous journeys runs from 27 July to 24 September 2023 in Room 3 at the British Museum.

The Asahi Shimbun Displays are a series of regularly changing displays which look at objects in new or different ways. Sometimes the display highlights a well-known item, sometimes it surprises the audience with extraordinary items from times and cultures that may not be very familiar. This is also an opportunity for the Museum to learn how it can improve its larger exhibitions and permanent gallery displays. These displays have been made possible by the generous sponsorship of The Asahi Shimbun Company, who are long-standing supporters of the British Museum. With a circulation of about 6 million for the morning edition alone, *The Asahi Shimbun* is the most prestigious newspaper in Japan. The company also publishes magazines and books, and provides a substantial information service on the Internet. The Asahi Shimbun Company has a century long tradition of staging exhibitions in Japan of art, culture and history from around the world.

This display is situated within the Museum’s long-term engagement and dialogue with partners and stakeholders in Nigeria. In addition to its role as a member of the Benin Dialogue Group and key contributor to the Digital Benin project, the Museum is partnering with the Museum of West African Art Trust (MOWAA) and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) on a five- year archaeology project in Benin City, including important pre-construction work in advance of new heritage building developments. The narratives explored in this display also echo those of ‘Perilous passage’, a work recently generously gifted to the Museum by the Syrian-born artist Issam Kourbaj to commemorate ‘Refugee Week’.



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Further information

Contact the Communications team: communications@britishmuseum.org

High resolution images and caption sheet available at: <http://bit.ly/3OvJG9l>

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/perilous-journeys>

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