IN SIMPLE TERMS, my poems and enthused works of art are describable as 'artlyrics.' Artlyrics may sound less commonplace than lyrical works of art associated with some artists of the Nsukka School. The word 'artlyric' is a domestic word. On the one hand, the word means a work of art inspired by the content and mechanism of poetry; on the other, it denotes a poetic work derived from the visual arts. My art transcends visual activism; in its linear admission and implied narrative my art is a visual diary of life. In my work, including poetry, I probe human nature. I look beyond the physical form because the human mind is the infinite human being to comprehend. In my work, the viewer will notice a dialogue between aesthetics and symbolism, between culture and self, in which complexity outweighs simplicity. In the verses, the reader will come across oral traditions in the form of idioms, proverbs and, in recent works, excerpts from conversations with people. My concern is not to copy nature as exponents of naturalism do, but to make contemplative statements about life: its complexity, its uncertainty, and the vitality of our collective existence. Narrative and intellectual rigour are more explicit in my work than photorealism and erotic sensuousness.

Thus, in this portfolio, I mean to share with the viewing reader a range of art and poems of mine from the decade I spent at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and some obliging visual art from the Home Stories and Cyberscapes intervals. I refer to the Nsukka period of my life as an artist as an evolutionary era. In the early 1980s, I wrote some lyrics for song compositions and made guitars as my interest in the per-© African Cultures, Visual Arts, and the Museum: Sights / Sites of Creativity and Conflict, ed. Tobias Döring (Matatu 25–26; Amsterdam & New York: Editions Rodopi, 2002).
forming arts flourished. After attending some classes in prose and poetry at Nsukka, I began to write poems; few of these early poems survive. Along with innumerable poets, some of them renowned, I read some of these poems at the Anthill on Wednesday Musings. I am one of the several artist–poets to emerge from the Nsukka School. Uko Akpaide, Chike Azuonye, Toni Ndikanwu, Greg Odo, Sylvester Ogbechie, Olu Oguibe, Chika Okeke, Obiora Udechukwu and of course, Gbubemi Amaritsewor are all artist–poets associated with the school who also read their poems at the Anthill, that poetry lair at Nsukka. For example, the political and social nuances in What the Madman Said: Poems by Obiora Undechukwu (published by Boomerang Press, Bayreuth, 1985) is evidence that a true artist can express him- or herself in whatever creative medium is available. The book is a poetic sigh about the human psyche and the shared failure of leadership in the country. Olu Oguibe’s A Gathering Fear (also published by Boomerang Press, 1992) and his Songs for Catalina (1994) are likewise compelling volumes of poetry by an artist–poet whose roots are in Nsukka. Accordingly, my Cyberscapes from the Old Country is an anthology of illustration poems of mine that I wish to publish. “Cyber” as used here means to navigate, and “scapes” relates to the environment of the mind.

For me, the chance to share my knowledge is as important as the process of creating my own work. Indeed, the two roles are symbiotic. Hence, Home Stories an exhibition of my art in the recent past travelled to museums and galleries in the USA. It was suffused with my experiences of growing up in continental Africa. On the surface, my work appears to have changed in the course of travelling, schooling and working in America, but that linear rendition of form, narrative approach, and economy of means resulting from the training at Nsukka is still intrinsic in both my literary and my visual activism. I consider my literary and visual arts to be a form of public service. As an American artist who grew up in Africa in the 1960s, my works remain subservient to my binary cultures, to our differences and commonalities – to our basic human nature. Certainly, I knew the Biafran Civil War years and the years of reconstruction; it is our basic nature to have conflicts and resolutions.

Where, again, does my poetic art cohere with my visual art? Poetry and my type of narrative art contain language within language. In the conventional mechanics of poetry, there is heavy reliance on imagery, simile, metaphor and other means of association; likewise, my art relies on symbolism that may require knowledge of my world to be understood. The reader will realize that both forms – visual and poetic art – emerge from life, from my sensory experiences with events and people. In both artistic forms, in the poetics of the deceitful or, rather, concealing differences in the cultures of Euro-America and Africa, I narrate communally shared values. I emphasize the universalism of human existence. This is because, from childhood on, I have