

Buffalo, NY - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Buffalo Arts Studio presents:

Léwuga Tata Benson,

Fueling Change: A Multimedia Exploration of Niger Delta's Oil Crisis

July 26–September 7, 2024

Opening Reception, Friday July 26, 2024, 5:00–8:00 pm



Buffalo Arts Studio is excited to present Léwuga Tata Benson's *Fueling Change: A Multimedia Exploration of Niger Delta's Oil Crisis*. Benson's immersive, multimedia exhibition will shed light on the harsh realities of oil extraction and its effects on the indigenous people of the Niger Delta in Western Nigeria, his homeland. Through a thought-provoking combination of artifacts, original footage, and sound, visitors will be transported into the lives of those most affected, raising awareness and fostering dialogue about the social, economic, and environmental consequences of unregulated oil extraction practices.

Fueling Change will be on display **July 26–September 7, 2024**, with an **opening reception on Friday, July 26, from 5:00–8:00 pm**. The exhibition and reception are free and open to the public.

Inspired by Benson's need to get closer to his familial roots and unpack the reasons why his family was forced to leave Port Harcourt, Nigeria, *Fueling Change* explores the impact and consequences of oil extraction—particularly its effects on the people still living in proximity to it and those who were displaced by it. The compilation of live-action footage, audio materials, and insightful conversations gathered from Benson's time in Port Harcourt, demonstrate that oil extraction has far-reaching consequences that too often go unnoticed.

Three large projections dominate the exhibition space, with each offering a different perspective of the Niger Delta's struggles. The first projects across two walls, distorting the faces of individuals who stand along the river's edge and confront the camera. In the second, the camera follows two guides who walk along a path that leads through the jungle, into a village kitchen, and finally at an impotent oil pump. The third video jumps and jerks along as people walk through the village, intentionally breaking with the real-time recordings of the other two. This section projects a manic energy that makes it difficult to watch for more than a few seconds. In the center of the gallery, an oil can hangs from the ceiling, casting shadows onto each of the three videos. Benson reminds the viewer of the profound impact of oil extraction in every aspect of life in his hometown.

As an interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker, Léwuga Tata Benson's work bridges cultures and explores the dynamic interplay between identity, environmental sustainability, and human connection. Rooted in his Ogoni heritage in Nigeria, Benson draws inspiration from the tradition of repurposing to prevent waste. This ethos infuses Benson's art, as seen in installations like *The Land Gives Until It No Longer Can* (2022), *Hang in There* (2022), *Traces of Displacement* (2023), *Carrying Identity*, *Carrying The Weight* (2023), and *Fueling Change* (2024). Embracing Ogoni storytelling, Benson's work engages all the senses, integrating songs, dance, and props, creating a holistic experience for visitors. His artistic practice seamlessly incorporates these traditions to create immersive narratives that provoke thought, foster empathy, and celebrate cultural richness. Benson's journey has been marked by awards and accolades, including the NYSCA 2024 Support for Artists Grant and the Gregory Capasso Scholarship for outstanding work in film.

Buffalo Arts Studio receives exhibition support from The Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Erie County Cultural Funds, Humanities New York, John R. Oishei Foundation, M&T Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Arts & Culture Initiative, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the New York State Council for the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and through Arts Services Inc.'s Creative Impact Fund program thanks to a New York State Senate Initiative supported by the NYS Legislature and the Office of the Governor, and administered by the New York State Council on the Arts.

About Buffalo Arts Studio:

Buffalo Arts Studio (BAS) connects diverse communities through visual arts via inclusive exhibitions, educational programs, mentorships, and public art while also providing affordable studio space, exposure, paid opportunities, and ongoing professional development for visual artists. BAS is a catalyst for self-empowerment, innovation, and action focused on enhancing our region

Buffalo Arts Studio connects diverse communities through exhibitions, educational programs, and public art while providing support for visual artists. BAS is a catalyst for self-empowerment, innovation, and action focused on enhancing our region.

Media Contact:

Sydney O'Shei

Special Events & Development Coordinator

Buffalo Arts Studio

716-833-4450 x 114

sydney@buffaloartsstudio.org

<https://www.buffaloartstudio.org>

Note to Editors: High-resolution images and additional press materials are available upon request.