

Black Muse Art Festival 2025 Narrative Report


BLACK MUSE
ART festival

“Let the Forest Dance” | Second Edition

Following its foundational edition in 2024, the second Black Muse Art Festival took place in Benin City from 8–12 November 2025, expanding the festival into a five-day multidisciplinary programme connecting visual art (contemporary African art) with literature, performance, architecture, food, craft and heritage.









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ART festival





Programme & Participation

The 2025 edition activated the Black Muse Residence and Sculpture Park as working cultural spaces.
The programme included the opening of the Ázágba Pavilion, designed by architect-in-residence James Inedu George with a stained glass installation by Victor Ehikhamenor, and the sculpture exhibition *Today, Tomorrow, The Moon Will Still Be*, curated by Renèe Mboya.

The festival brought together artists, writers, curators, architects, performers, cultural practitioners and audiences from 16 countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. This breadth of participation expanded the professional and cultural networks activated through the festival while bringing different practices and forms of knowledge into dialogue in Benin City.

The programme presented work and activities across sculpture, architecture, food, craft, theatre, literature and performance, creating opportunities for artists and practitioners to share skills, knowledge and creative processes with audiences.





Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange

Capacity building was embedded in the programme through practical workshops and encounters with practitioners. Bronze-making workshops led by Kelly Omodamwen introduced participants to sculptural processes and techniques, while The Art of Okuku provided an opportunity to engage with Edo beadwork, craftsmanship and cultural knowledge.



Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange

The programme also supported knowledge exchange through conversations, guided experiences, culinary practice, literary programming and performance. These activities created opportunities for participants to learn directly from artists, artisans and cultural practitioners while strengthening the professional and creative networks around Black Muse.







Artist Mobility

The festival facilitated the mobility of participating 5 international artists and visual art practitioners from Ghana, Kenya, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, along with 7 Nigerian artists from Lagos and Ibadan, to Benin City. Their participation across exhibitions, workshops, performances, talks and other festival activities created opportunities for professional exchange, peer learning and engagement with Benin City's cultural environment.

Artist mobility therefore functioned as a practical component of the festival's capacity-building approach, enabling practitioners to encounter different artistic practices, develop professional relationships and participate in a shared programme outside their usual contexts.


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Professional Development & Recognition

The inaugural Black Muse Patron's Art Prize for Sculpture provided professional recognition for sculptural practice, with a jury comprising Peju Oshin, Kemi Ilesanmi, Aude Mgba, Kola Aina and Qudus Onikeku. Supported by the Osahon Okunbo Foundation, the prize created an additional platform for visibility and recognition of contemporary sculptural practice.



BLACK MUSE ART festival

METRICS ROUNDUP FOR BMAF 2025

600+
guests attended the sculpture park opening event

250+
out-of-town guests attended the festival

350+
local guests attended the festival

100+
internation guests attended the festival

120+
students attended the festival

15
artisans represented the local artisanal community at the festival

20+
local/international media coverage of the festival

151k
cumulative views on Instagram during the festival

Press Coverage of BMAF 2025

The Black Muse Art Festival received critical acclaim from prestigious international and local platforms, including The Guardian UK, Contemporary And, ART news, and Brittle Paper and mentions in other notable platforms. These reflections underscore the enduring impact of our artists' work.


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Benin City's Flourishing Art Ecosystem Is Gaining International Attention for a Reason

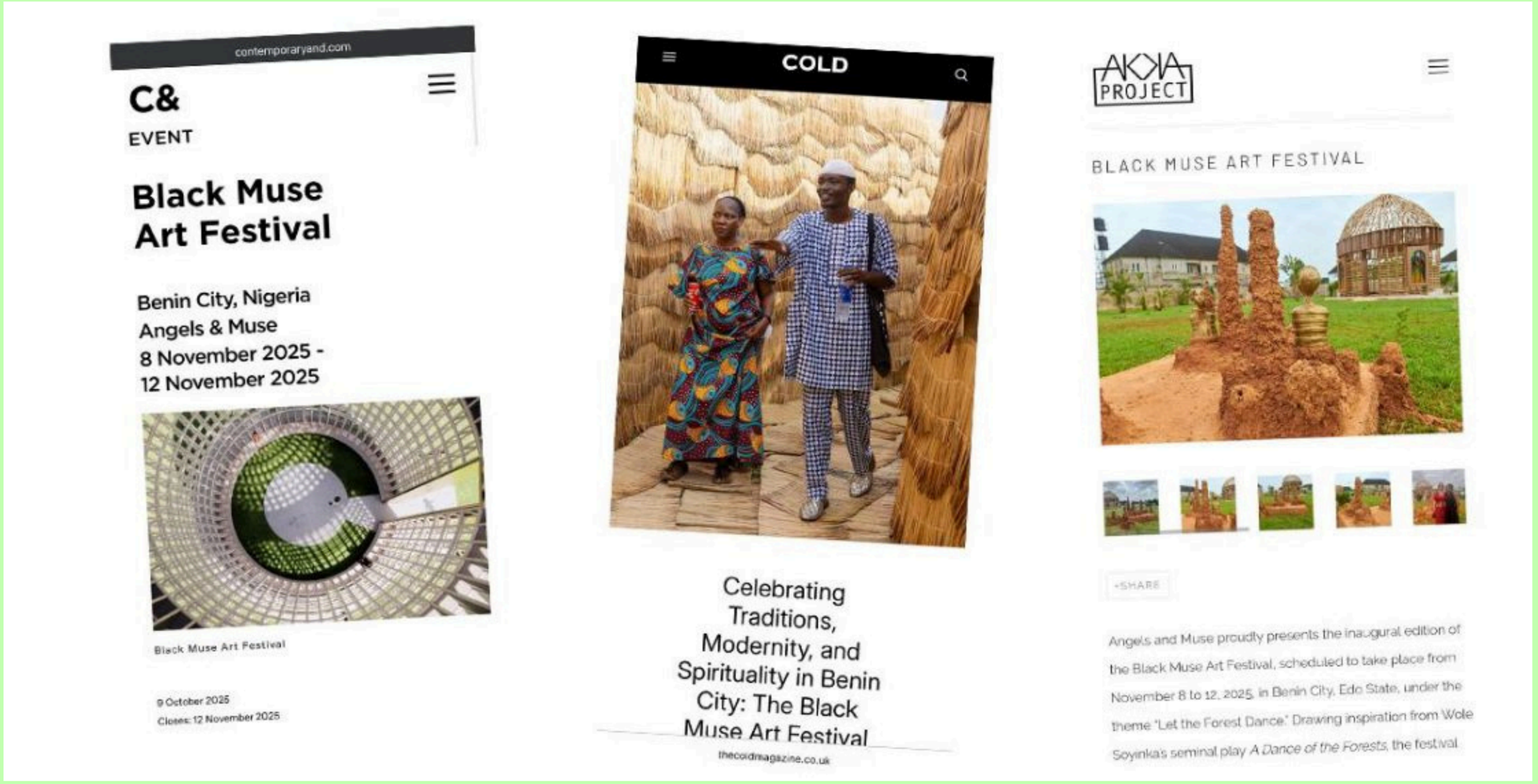
BY GAMELI HAMELO

December 15, 2025 5:30am

The Ázágbà Pavilon at the Black Muse Sculpture Park, with Victor Ehikhamenor speaking in front of it at the Black Muse Art Festival.

COURTESY ANGELS AND MUSE AND VICTOR EHIKHAMENOR

Press Coverage of BMAF 2025



Organizations We Have Worked With




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Key Outcomes

- expanded Black Muse Art Festival into a five-day value-packed artistic programme;
- activated the Black Muse Residence and Sculpture Park as spaces for artistic production, learning and public engagement
- provided practical opportunities for skills development and knowledge exchange
- facilitated artist and practitioner mobility to Benin City
- connected contemporary practice with local cultural knowledge, and vice versa
- created multiple pathways for public participation and audience development
- strengthened the organisational and professional capacity required to sustain Black Muse artistic infrastructure as a continuous cultural platform that extends beyond the festival through continued artist residencies and public programming all through the year.

Lessons Learned

The second edition reinforced the value of embedding capacity building within cultural programming. Practical workshops, artist-led sessions and interdisciplinary programming created stronger opportunities for skills and knowledge exchange.

The expanded five-day format also demonstrated the need for clearer production systems, longer preparation periods and stronger coordination across programme streams.



Lessons Learned

The festival's dynamic approach showed the value of connecting contemporary art with local knowledge, while highlighting the need to develop more structured opportunities for participants and audiences to engage with these areas.

These lessons inform the continued development of other similar programmes by Angels and Muse, including the forthcoming 2026 edition of the Black Muse Art Festival.



BLACK MUSE ART Festival

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS OF BMAF 2025









Welcome Reception

On the evening of November 8, 2025, friends of Angels and Muse and members of the global art community gathered at the Black Muse residency facility in Benin for an intimate night of revelry, setting the celebratory atmosphere of the festival.



Sculpture Park Opening

On the warm afternoon of November 9, 2025, as soft clouds drifted gently against the blue sky, festival goers congregated at the grounds of the Black Muse Sculpture Park, where the works of the exhibiting artists, alongside two loaned sculptures from the University of Benin, bejewelled the lush grass of the park.




COAT OF
MANY LI
OSARU OBASE
BRONZE DIPTYCH WITH SITE-RE













Black Muse Patron's Art Prize for Sculpture

For her installation *The Anthill*, Osaru Obaseki won the inaugural Black Muse Patron's Art Prize for Sculpture.

The Anthill features two bronze sculptures coated in a luminous gold finish, situated on an anthill.



Edo on My Tongue

During the festival, guests gathered for an evening of culinary and cultural experience celebrating the flavours, stories, and spirit of Benin City through food, art, film, and palmwine.



Bronze-Making Workshop

Under the guidance of Black Muse Sculpture Park exhibiting artiist Kelly Omodamwen, participants in the Bronze-Making Workshop immersed themselves in the ancient art of Bronze Making. Omodamwen, a descendant of one of Benin City's most renowned bronze casting families, passed on age-old knowledge to the participants and sent them off with custom-made bronze sculptures.




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