

Part 3:

Anatsui: The breaking of a pot, for instance: in my culture, this doesn't mean the pot's use has ended; rather now it's open to more uses. If it was a water pot, it was only for water; if it was a grain pot, it was only for grains. But once it breaks, it can be used for so many other things. It's a kind of freedom that is given to the medium in the broken form. And again, this idea ties in with art being life. I even think that the idea of breaking or dilapidation is a prerequisite for growth or change. In pottery or ceramics, when a fired pot—clay taken to, say, 1200 or 1400 degrees celsius—breaks, there's a practice of pulverizing it and mixing it with fresh clay, like mixing different generations together. That the clay has been through the firing process gives it more resilience and more strength. It withstands subsequent firing better than it would have before and better than clay fresh from the ground.

Rail: Your "Broken Pots" series (1977–81) is a testament to this. *We Dey Patch Am* (1979) draws on traditions of Nok clay firing. I love your use of Pidgin English in that title, referring also to the saying "We dey patch am e dey leak," which translates to "It leaks even as we try to mend." Far from the futility of patching, you demonstrate that from the destruction of one function, a new purpose can be born. The ceramic sculpture *Chambers of Memory* (1977), which is supported by an intricate internal scaffolding, appears to commemorate a rebirth as much as anything.

Anatsui: That period was also very much about finding meaning in fracture. About things that had lived, had broken, and yet could still speak. The title *We Dey Patch Am* implies both irony and resilience; it acknowledges the impossibility of returning something to its original state, yet affirms the human impulse to keep repairing, to keep making do. In that gesture, I saw a metaphor for history itself: how cultures and identities continue to build from what has been damaged or dispersed.

With *Chambers of Memory*, I wanted to take that idea further, to construct something that carried the memory of breaking within it yet stood with its own new strength. The internal scaffolding was a way of showing that what holds us up is often invisible—a network of connections, of repairs, or past experiences that continue to support the present form. So yes, both works were about transformation, but not to erase the wound but to reconfigure it into another kind of wholeness.