

## ACHIEVING BALANCE AND RHYTHM IN PAINTING THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF *ADIRE ELEKO* MOTIFS

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### **Abstract**

The evolution of contemporary African art is rooted in the interplay between tradition and innovation, with artists drawing from indigenous visual lexicons to express modern identities. This study addresses the underexplored potential of Yoruba *adire eleko* motifs, rich in visual balance, rhythm, and symmetry, as compositional frameworks in contemporary painting. The research aimed to demonstrate how the application of *adire eleko* motifs in painting transcends mere aesthetic enhancement, offering a systematic approach to visual structuring rooted in indigenous African knowledge. It also sought to contribute to decolonial aesthetics by repositioning African traditional forms within contemporary global art practices. This qualitative study utilized an arts-based studio exploration methodology. Data included *adire eleko* cloth designs from publications and scanned photographs, with a focus on thirty-five *adire eleko* designs and twenty *Ibadan dun* patterns containing forty-four embedded motifs. Purposive sampling was used to select *Ibadan dun* due to its aesthetic relevance and complex composition. Data collection involved observations, sketches, drawings, and secondary sources. The study revealed a profound interplay between traditional aesthetics and contemporary artistic expression. The inherent design principles of *adire eleko* patterns characterized by repetitive forms, geometric precision, and narrative depth served as a fertile ground for achieving sophisticated notions of balance and rhythm in painted compositions. Paintings like 'The Artist' demonstrated asymmetrical balance and subtle rhythmic integration, while 'Owo Omo Alagemo' explicitly showcased symmetrical balance and abstract rhythm derived directly from *adire eleko* design principles. The findings demonstrate that the transformation of *adire eleko* motifs into painting is a transformative process, reinterpreting their essence within a new medium and granting them expanded aesthetic and conceptual dimensions. This approach does not only celebrates an endangered artistic tradition but also contributes to the theoretical and practical expansion of African visual culture and vocabularies within contemporary art discourse, challenging Western-centric notions of form and composition.

**Keywords:** *Adire Eleko*, Yoruba motifs, painting, balance, rhythm, contemporary African art, decolonial aesthetics.

## Introduction

The evolution of contemporary African art is deeply anchored in a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, where artists draw from indigenous visual lexicons to express modern identities and concepts. Among the myriads of African art traditions, Yoruba textile artistry, particularly the *adire eleko* technique, presents a vibrant tapestry of symbols, histories, and philosophies capable of transforming the visual language of modern painting. The *adire eleko* medium, traditionally produced through starch-resist dyeing methods, encapsulates an expansive repertoire of motifs derived from mythology, nature, communal life, and socio-political symbolism. These motifs, painstakingly designed and rich in visual balance, rhythm, and symmetry, remain underexplored within the broader realm of contemporary painting (Areo & Kalilu, 2013).

*Adire eleko*, as a traditional Yoruba textile technique, combines artistry with cultural storytelling through intricate patterns that form a structured rhythm and visual harmony. Each motif is not only decorative but also semiotic imbued with layered meanings and ancestral wisdom (Odoja, George and Nneka, 2023). The design framework often adheres to geometric coherence, where squares or rectangles contain individual motifs arranged in calculated repetition and symmetry. This quality reflects the innate capacity of the medium to project pictorial equilibrium and visual cadence two fundamental principles in painting (Barbour, 2016). These elements not only lend themselves to the exploration of formal aesthetics but also offer a compelling lens through which traditional African knowledge systems intersect with contemporary artistic practices (Bamgbose, 2025).

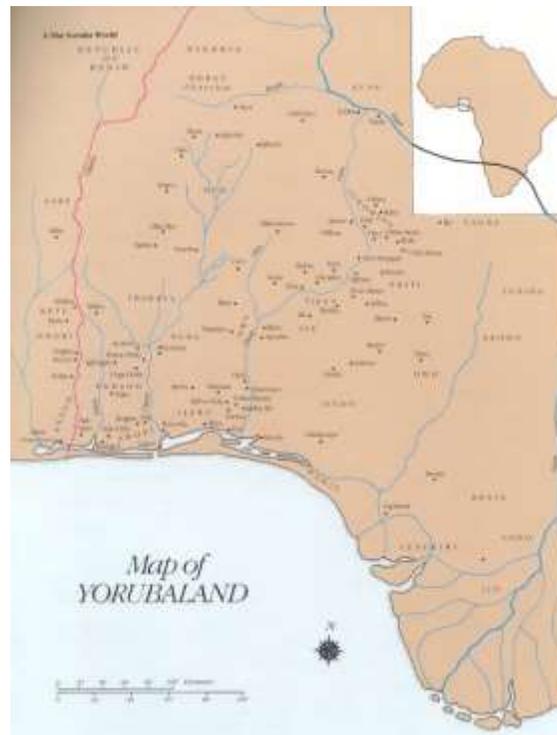


Fig. 1. Yoruba Cities and Towns of Southwestern Nigeria including Eastern part of the Republic of Benin. YORUBA: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought. Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York. 1989.

Despite the abundance and richness of African decorative traditions, academic and artistic engagement with the transformation of *adire eleko* motifs into painting remains marginal. While there is increasing incorporation of African motifs in visual art, the use of *adire eleko* symbols as compositional frameworks in contemporary painting has not been extensively examined for their potential to communicate balance and rhythm. Prior studies tend to approach African motifs as ornamental or symbolic additions rather than intrinsic compositional drivers (Okanlawon, 2013). Contemporary Nigerian artists like Nike Okundaye and Tola Wewe have engaged with Yoruba aesthetics, yet often in ways that foreground the decorative rather than the structural possibilities of traditional motifs (Oloidi, 2022).

This research is grounded in the conviction that the application of *adire eleko* motifs in painting transcends mere aesthetic enhancement it offers a systematic approach to visual structuring rooted in indigenous African knowledge. The Ibadan dun design, in particular, exemplifies these qualities, being composed of four rows of seven squares or rectangles each hosting uniquely stylised motifs inspired by Yoruba architecture, fauna, and folklore. The recurrence of motifs like Mapo Hall

pillars and symbolic animals within these squares exemplifies intentional repetition and variation, thus constructing an internal visual rhythm akin to musical tempo in composition (Oke, 2016). This systematic arrangement opens interpretative pathways for achieving balance and rhythm within the context of contemporary painting, thereby situating Yoruba visual culture within global artistic discourses (Falade, 2021).

Understanding rhythm in visual composition is akin to comprehending temporal flow in music or poetry. Rhythm in painting refers to the intentional repetition or alternation of elements such as lines, shapes, and colours to generate visual movement and emotional tempo (Gude, 2020). Similarly, balance concerns the distribution of visual weight that stabilises a composition and fosters harmony. Traditional *adire eleko* compositions already embody these principles through their meticulous spatial organisation and recursive motifs. Their symmetrical structure provides a fertile platform for recontextualising traditional designs into dynamic painted compositions that speak both to ancestral heritage and modern visual inquiry (Onibere & Ottuh, 2024).

Recent scholarship emphasises the need for cultural revival through artistic innovation, particularly in reclaiming and redefining endangered indigenous art forms. As noted by Omojola (2023), revitalising African textile traditions through contemporary artistic channels not only sustains cultural memory but also expands the expressive potential of indigenous art beyond its original utilitarian functions. In this regard, the present study contributes to a growing field of decolonial aesthetics that advocate for the repositioning of African traditional forms within contemporary global art practices. By appropriating the structural grammar and visual poetics of *adire eleko* into painting, the study challenges Western-centric notions of form and composition, presenting instead a Yoruba-based framework for achieving balance and rhythm.

Furthermore, theoretical models such as Wassily Kandinsky's concept of "inner necessity" and Franz Marc's symbolic abstraction provide critical touchpoints for situating this research within broader art historical contexts. The philosophical undercurrent of this inquiry is drawn from the expressive abstractionism championed by Marc, whose emphasis on internal vision over external mimicry resonates with the Yoruba epistemology of visual narration (Partsch & Morrison, 2004). The synthesis of indigenous motif systems with expressionist ideals provides an analytical scaffold for interpreting the emotional and conceptual textures embedded in the painting process.

From a semiotic standpoint, Yoruba *adire eleko* motifs represent a codified system of meanings, capable of functioning as both visual language and cultural document. This aligns with Hall's (2021) encoding/decoding model, which asserts that every cultural artefact is embedded with encoded meanings subject to interpretation by the viewer. Each motif, be it the chameleon (*Alagemo*), the snake (*Ejo*), or the platter of lies (*Opon iro*) carries embedded connotations within the Yoruba cosmology, thereby enriching the painter's canvas not just with patterns, but with profound cultural texts (Abdurraheem, 2025). The transformation of these motifs into painting does not simply transpose images; it translates epistemologies.



**Plate 1.** '*Alagemo*', Ajayi Oluseyi  
Oil on Canvas, 71 x 76cm. 2015.



**Plate 2.** '*Ejo*', Ajayi Oluseyi.  
Oil on Canvas, 61 x 61cm, 2015.

The approach of this research also aligns with interdisciplinary studies that integrate visual arts with anthropology, cultural studies, and design theory. Scholars such as Roy-Omoni (2024) and Ogunfowokan (2023) have highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary engagements in preserving intangible heritage and reinventing traditional art practices for the contemporary era. The contextualisation of *adire eleko* motifs within painting bridges the gap between textile tradition and modern visual practice, facilitating a dialogue between material heritage and formal innovation. Such hybrid methodologies resonate with current global trends that favour cultural hybridity, reflexivity, and the localisation of global artistic paradigms (Mdletshe, 2025).

Additionally, visual motifs in Yoruba art are intrinsically linked to orality, proverbs, and performance. The communicative role of symbols like the chameleon and the bird goes beyond decorative aesthetics to embody Yoruba philosophies of adaptability, transformation, and transcendence (Oyetade, 2024). Through compositional manipulation, adjusting scale, line quality, colour fields, and spatial orientation, these motifs are rendered not just as symbols but as active agents of visual rhythm and emotional resonance in painting. Thus, each painting becomes a palimpsest, layering ancestral knowledge with contemporary aesthetics.

Ultimately, this study repositions Yoruba traditional *adire eleko* motifs from their functional textile origins to the realm of painterly exploration, foregrounding their structural, rhythmic, and symbolic capacities. By transforming these motifs into visual compositions that emphasise balance and rhythm, the research not only celebrates an endangered artistic tradition but also contributes to the theoretical and practical expansion of African visual culture within contemporary art discourse.

## Literature Review

### Historical and Cultural Context of *Adire Eleko*

The exploration of traditional Yoruba textile art, specifically *adire eleko*, has been instrumental in understanding the intersection of cultural symbolism, aesthetic design, and artistic expression in contemporary visual practices. *Adire eleko*, a starch-resist indigo-dyed cloth, is renowned for its intricate hand-painted motifs, each rooted in Yoruba socio-cultural heritage and oral tradition. These motifs transcend decorative utility and enter the realm of symbolic communication, making them fertile ground for application in painting to achieve balance and rhythm two foundational elements in visual composition.

The historical evolution of *adire eleko* reflects its role as both a utilitarian and expressive artefact. *Adire eleko* rose to prominence in the early 20th century and, despite declining in the mid-century, experienced a resurgence due to its affordability and cultural significance (Akinbileje, 2014). The cloth, beyond its function as clothing, served as a reflection of socio-political changes and transitions within Yoruba society. As noted by Ozokeraha (2010), cloth transforms from the mundane to the symbolic, capturing inheritance, status, and collective memory.

## **Classification and Symbolism of Adire Motifs**

### **Typologies of Motifs**

Central to the visual and conceptual strength of *adire eleko* are its motifs. Areo and Kalilu (2013) classified these into five core types: geometric, figural, skewmorphic, alphabetic, and celestiomorphic. Each classification represents not only form but a philosophy or narrative. The motifs such as the chameleon (alagemo), snake (ejo), and bird (eye) carry significant metaphorical and philosophical weight in Yoruba thought, often intertwined with proverbial wisdom. This semiotic quality of motifs supports Lazzari and Schlesier's (2008) argument that traditional imagery is not merely representational but a system of encoded cultural values.

### **Motifs as Visual Proverbs**

Culturally, *adire eleko* motifs act as visual proverbs. Osoba (2014) asserts that Yoruba proverbs encapsulate collective wisdom, and *adire* motifs often serve as visual manifestations of these oral traditions. For example, the chameleon motif, associated with the proverb "Alagemo ti bi omo re tan, aimo'jo ku si owo omo re," metaphorically communicates themes of adaptability and personal responsibility. This alignment of visual form and philosophical content is central to the Yoruba aesthetic, where form is never divorced from meaning (Campbell, 2008).

## **Aesthetic Principles: Balance and Rhythm**

### **Structured Layout and Compositional Balance**

From a design standpoint, *adire eleko* compositions are highly structured. They often consist of squares or rectangles filled with symbolic forms that are symmetrically or asymmetrically distributed across the cloth. As Barbour (2016) posits, cloths like Ibadan dun offer a balanced aesthetic that satisfies both visual harmony and symbolic coherence. This balance mirrors the

principle of equilibrium in painting, where no single area overpowers another, creating a unified visual experience (Bradley, 2015).

### **Rhythmic Movement through Repetition**

Rhythm, on the other hand, emerges from the repetition and variation of motifs, a phenomenon that, according to Acton (2009), guides the viewer's eye and generates compositional flow. The convergence of painting principles with Yoruba design logic finds resonance in Kandinsky's and Franz Marc's expressionist models. Franz Marc's concept of "inner necessity," which prioritises emotional resonance over representational accuracy, parallels the Yoruba philosophical approach to visual communication (Parsch & Morrison, 2004)

### **Visual Semiotics and Philosophical Significance**

#### **Symbolism in Form and Colour**

In examining the structure of *adire eleko*, Areo and Kalilu's (2013) typology becomes particularly useful. The figural motifs, including both flora and fauna, not only reference the natural world but do so through a stylised lens that enhances their symbolic charge. The skewmorphic patterns, representing man-made objects like mirrors, drums, and spoons, link the cloth to everyday Yoruba life. This juxtaposition of the natural and constructed world within a single design reflects a worldview where all elements of life are interconnected—a concept which resonates deeply with holistic design principles in painting (Aina, 2022).

#### **Chromatic and Textural Dynamics**

The use of indigo dye in *adire eleko* introduces a chromatic philosophy worth considering in contemporary painting. Traditionally, indigo symbolised spirituality, depth, and protection, but the application of modern pigments allows for expanded interpretive possibilities (Oke, 2016). The transformation from the traditional two-tone indigo and white to a full colour spectrum in painting facilitates the visual articulation of mood, energy, and movement—thus enhancing rhythm and balance within the composition (Bentor, 2020).

## Contemporary Artistic Integration and Theoretical Insights

### Adaptation in Modern Painting

The application of *adire eleko* motifs in painting is further exemplified through the work of contemporary Nigerian artists who have employed traditional symbols in modern visual contexts. Artists such as Babalola Lawson and Moyo Ogundipe integrate indigenous motifs into their compositions, achieving structural balance and rhythmic fluidity. While these artists often draw from diverse African traditions, their works illustrate the potential of *adire eleko* motifs to function not just as decorative elements but as compositional anchors (Barrett, 2020).

### Visual Narrative and Cultural Agency

In recent years, there has been a scholarly shift towards understanding African motifs as active agents in narrative construction rather than passive embellishments. This reconceptualisation finds theoretical support in Mitchell's (2021) argument that images act as historical agents capable of shaping discourse and behaviour. In this context, the transformation of motifs such as the snake, bird, and chameleon into painting does not merely replicate traditional forms but reactivates their cultural agency. The resulting artworks become not only visually compelling but also philosophically grounded.

### Technological Innovations and Hybrid Expressions

Additionally, modern digital technologies have facilitated new interpretations of traditional motifs. According to Ogunfowokan (2023), the digitisation of African textile designs has opened up novel avenues for artistic reinterpretation, allowing for hybrid forms that blend tradition with innovation. This hybridity mirrors the goals of this research, which seeks to maintain the integrity of the original motifs while exploring their capacity for painterly transformation.

### Synthesis and Implications for Artistic Practice

The arrangement of motifs in *adire eleko* cloths such as the Ibadan dun pattern exemplifies rhythmic structuring through spatial repetition. Each motif is housed within a geometric grid, creating a measured cadence akin to musical rhythm. According to Gude (2020), such structured repetition in art leads to a kinaesthetic experience that engages viewers on an intuitive level. Applying this methodology to painting allows for the creation of compositions that are not only visually balanced but also rhythmically engaging.

## Methodology

This study embraced a qualitative research methodology, specifically arts-based studio exploration, aligning with the premise that arts-based inquiry and research texts incorporate design elements. The research aimed for an in-depth understanding of human behavior and its underlying reasons, a subjective quest to transform Yoruba traditional *adire eleko* motifs into paintings. Data comprised *adire-eleko* cloth designs from publications, and scanned photographs. The population included thirty-five *adire-eleko* designs and twenty *Ibadan dun* patterns with forty-four embedded motifs. Purposive sampling was used, selecting *Ibadan dun* due to its aesthetic relevance and complex composition. Data collection involved primary sources like observation, sketches, and drawings, and secondary sources like art history books and journals. Preliminary studies graphically analyzed twenty *Ibadan dun* patterns. Data analysis involved categorizing twelve selected motifs into analytical, exploratory, and stylistic sketches, leading to further conceptualization and thematic development.

## Result and Discussion

The journey of translating the rich, symbolic tapestry of *Adire Eleko* motifs into the realm of painting, as explored in this study, reveals a profound interplay between traditional aesthetics and contemporary artistic expression. The findings demonstrate how the inherent design principles of these Yoruba textile patterns, characterized by their repetitive forms, geometric precision, and narrative depth serve as a fertile ground for achieving sophisticated notions of balance and rhythm within painted compositions. Through a meticulous process of adaptation and reinterpretation, the paintings discussed herein transcend mere replication, offering fresh perspectives on visual harmony while preserving the cultural resonance of their origins.

At the heart of this exploration lies the transformation of indigenous design into fine art, a process that necessitated a deep engagement with both the visual vocabulary of *Adire Eleko* and the expressive possibilities of paint on canvas. The artistic approach adopted, ranging from impressionistic renditions to abstract expressionistic interpretations, allowed for a nuanced exploration of how motifs, originally conceived for cloth, could inform and dictate compositional integrity in a two/three-dimensional artistic space. This recontextualization not only highlights the versatility of *Adire Eleko* aesthetics but also underscores the enduring capacity of traditional art forms to inspire and shape modern creative endeavors.

### The Artists': A Study in Visual Balance and Narrative Harmony

The painting titled 'The Artist' (Plate 3) serves as a compelling entry point into understanding how balance is meticulously achieved through the application of adapted motifs and strategic compositional choices. Rendered in a representational portraiture style, yet infused with an impressionistic sensibility, the artwork depicts a female *adire eleko* artist engrossed in her craft. The artist's figure, described as an "imposing mass" on the left, immediately establishes a dominant visual weight. This mass is not left to overpower the composition but is instead harmoniously countered by the "small circular form of paste's bowl at the picture plane's right lower-third," supported by the "off-white foreground representing the cloth she was working on." This deliberate counterpoise of large and small forms, positioned strategically across the canvas, exemplifies a sophisticated use of asymmetrical balance. The eye is naturally drawn from the dominant figure to the complementary detail, creating a visual flow that feels stable and resolved, rather than skewed or static.



**Plate 3.** 'The Artist', Ajayi Oluseyi.

Acrylic on Canvas, 75 x 90cm. 2015

Beyond mass and form, the color scheme in 'The Artist' plays a pivotal role in orchestrating visual equilibrium. The dominance of "Cerulean blue" across the composition is softened and enlivened by the strategic deployment of "complimentary red orange at the background." This

complementary color pairing inherently creates a vibrant tension, yet it is managed in such a way that neither color overwhelms the other, contributing to an overall sense of harmony. The "cloth's implied white colour" further resonates, highlighted by motifs in the upper part of the image, introducing areas of light and contrast that guide the viewer's gaze. The judicious placement of these lighter elements against the deeper blues and reds contributes to a balanced distribution of light and shadow, preventing any single area from becoming excessively heavy or empty.

Furthermore, the document notes the presence of a "transparent blanket of a section of *Ibadan dun* pattern on the figures' body and quite expressive at the background basically for aesthetics purpose." This subtle integration of the *Ibadan dun* pattern, while not immediately the focal point, adds a layer of intricate visual rhythm. The repetitive nature of the *Adire Eleko* motifs, even when rendered transparently, introduces a subtle textural and patternistic cadence that prevents the background from being monolithic. This rhythmic quality, achieved through implied repetition and pattern overlay, enhances the painting's depth without detracting from its primary representational elements. The harmonious balance of forms and colors is further reinforced by the "diagonal edge of the white cloth" being "harmoniously balanced by the opposing implied diagonal that ran from her headgear through the face, blouse neckline to her right elbow." Such diagonal lines introduce dynamic tension that, when balanced, creates a sense of movement and stability simultaneously, leading the viewer's eye across the canvas with a pleasing rhythm. This demonstrates a deep understanding of how the inherent geometric principles within *Adire Eleko* motifs can be translated into broader compositional strategies in painting.

### **Cloth Beater: Evoking Rhythm through Process and Form**

'Cloth Beater' (Plate 4) further extends the study into achieving rhythm in painting, this time through an impressionistic lens and an engagement with the repetitive, almost ritualistic, aspects of the traditional *Adire* process. The painting captures a stage in the textile's creation where the "dyed cloth had been rinsed in clean water and dried in the sun," subsequently given to an *Oloolu* "to beat it until the cloth's brilliance is revealed." This act of beating, described as vigorous and performed with a "mallet-like log of wood" on a "flat log of wood," inherently carries a strong sense of rhythmic action. While the document primarily describes the subject matter, the implication for its translation into painting is profound. An impressionistic style, with its characteristic visible brushstrokes and emphasis on light and movement, is ideally suited to convey this sense of repetitive motion and the rhythmic sound of the beating. The visual depiction would

likely involve recurring forms or patterns of strokes that echo the back-and-forth action, imbuing the artwork with an internal pulse.



**Plate 4. Oloolu (Cloth Beater)** Ajayi Oluseyi.

Acrylic on Canvas., 75 x 90cm. 2015

The "brilliance" revealed through the beating process can be metaphorically extended to the artistic revelation inherent in applying *Adire Eleko* motifs to canvas. Just as the physical act brings out the vibrancy of the cloth, the artist's reinterpretation brings out the aesthetic and symbolic richness of the motifs in a new medium. While the document doesn't detail specific *Adire* motifs within this particular painting, the very subject which is the transformation of the cloth, is a direct homage to the tradition from which the motifs themselves spring. The act of repetitive beating suggests a visual rhythm that an artist could translate into the painting through the arrangement of compositional elements, perhaps the repetition of shapes, the flow of lines, or the deliberate placement of color accents that create a sense of movement across the canvas. This painting, therefore, speaks to a different kind of rhythm: not just the static visual rhythm of repeated patterns, but the dynamic rhythm of a cultural process itself, inviting the viewer to perceive the underlying pulse of the depicted activity.

#### ***Owo Omo Alagemo'* Symmetrical Balance and Abstract Rhythm**

Perhaps the most explicit demonstration of balance and rhythm in the context of *Adire Eleko* motifs is found in 'Owo Omo Alagemo' (Plate 1). This painting is characterized by its "abstract expressionistic record" of a Yoruba proverb: "*Owo omo alagemo*," meaning, "The chameleon is done giving birth, the baby's inability to dance is left to it." This proverb, which underscores

adaptation and individual responsibility, is not merely illustrated but profoundly interpreted through abstract form and color, embodying symmetrical balance. The painting is "divided into two equal halves painted in green representing daylight and Prussian blue representing night period," a clear foundational structure for perfect bilateral symmetry. This division, coupled with the strategic placement of identical elements, creates a visually stable and harmonious composition.



**Plate 5.** 'Agboorun', Ajayi Oluseyi.

Acrylic on Canvas. 61 x 61cm. 2015

The core of its aesthetic lies in the direct application of *Adire Eleko* design principles. The painting explicitly adopts "Dots and rectangular shapes synonymous to the patterns of *adire eleko* as creative elements." These elements are not randomly scattered; they are purposefully used to represent the "mother chameleon" (large rectangles) and "baby chameleon" (small rectangles with red dots). The repetition of these geometric forms across the symmetrically divided canvas generates a palpable sense of visual rhythm. This rhythm is not merely decorative; it is integral to the painting's narrative, echoing the idea of lineage and the continuity of the chameleon's adaptive nature. The red dots, representing the chameleon's unique ability to adapt to its environment "either in day light or night hours," introduce points of visual interest and further reinforce the cyclical, rhythmic concept of time and transformation.

The limited color palette of "Emerald green, Cadmium red and Prussian blue" is masterfully employed to enhance both balance and rhythm. The stark contrast between green (daylight) and Prussian blue (night) in the two halves creates a powerful visual tension that is resolved through the unifying presence of the red dots and the repeating rectangular forms. This judicious selection and arrangement of colors contribute to the painting's dynamic equilibrium, preventing it from feeling either static or chaotic, despite its abstract nature. The emphasis on "symmetrical balance exploration" makes this painting a direct response to the study's central theme, demonstrating how the inherent structural qualities of *Adire Eleko* motifs can be distilled and magnified in an abstract painting to achieve profound compositional stability and visual flow. The work effectively communicates the proverb's wisdom through an abstract language of shape, color, and repetition, mirroring the *Adire* tradition's capacity to convey complex ideas through simplified, powerful forms.

### **General Principles: The Transformative Power of *Adire Eleko* Aesthetics**

The findings across these paintings; 'The Artist', *Oloolu* (Cloth Beater), and '*Owo Omo Alagemo*' collectively illuminate how the application of *Adire Eleko* motifs facilitates the achievement of balance and rhythm in painting. The transition from textile design to fine art is not a mere transfer but a transformative process where the essence of the motifs is reinterpreted within a new medium, granting them expanded aesthetic and conceptual dimensions.

Central to this transformation is the inherent design grammar of *Adire Eleko*. These motifs, characterized by their geometric precision, often incorporate squares, rectangles, lines, and dots, elements that are fundamental to constructing balanced and rhythmic compositions in any visual art form. The repetitive nature of patterns on *Adire* cloth naturally instills a sense of visual rhythm, guiding the eye across the surface. When extracted and recontextualized into a painting, this inherent rhythm can be amplified or subtly reconfigured through variations in scale, color, and arrangement, creating dynamic visual narratives. The systematic arrangement of motifs, as seen in the symmetrical balance of '*Owo Omo Alagemo*', directly translates the ordered beauty of *Adire* patterns onto canvas.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the symbolic significance of these motifs, often rooted in Yoruba proverbs and worldview, adds a profound layer to the discussion of balance and rhythm. The proverbs provide an intellectual and emotional framework within which the visual elements

operate. For instance, the chameleon's adaptability in *'Owo Omo Alagemo'* (plate 1) is mirrored by the painting's visual balance, suggesting a sense of internal stability regardless of external conditions. This fusion of aesthetic principles with deep cultural meaning elevates the art beyond mere formalism, imbuing the balance and rhythm with narrative weight. The motifs are not just shapes; they are carriers of culture, and their reinterpretation in painting allows these cultural narratives to achieve new forms of visual expression.

The artist's subjective interpretation also plays a crucial role. The selection, adaptation, and eventual integration of *Adire Eleko* motifs are not prescriptive. Instead, they involve a thoughtful process of extracting the essence of the motifs and employing them to achieve specific aesthetic outcomes. This process demonstrates how a traditional artistic vocabulary can be deconstructed and then rebuilt within a contemporary fine art context, resulting in works that are both culturally grounded and aesthetically innovative. The choice of artistic styles, whether impressionistic or abstract expressionistic, further highlights the flexibility with which these motifs can be reimagined. Impressionism allows for the capture of movement and light, contributing to a fluid rhythm, while abstract expressionism provides a fertile ground for exploring geometric balance and symbolic meaning through simplified forms and bold colors.

## **Conclusion**

The application of *Adire Eleko* motifs in contemporary painting presents a compelling convergence of traditional Yoruba aesthetics and modern artistic expression. This study demonstrates how the inherent design principles of these textile patterns characterized by repetitive forms, geometric precision, and narrative depth serve as a foundation for achieving sophisticated notions of balance and rhythm in painted compositions. Through a meticulous process of adaptation and reinterpretation, the discussed paintings transcend mere replication, offering fresh perspectives on visual harmony while preserving the cultural resonance of their origins.

The recontextualization of *Adire Eleko* motifs highlights their versatility and the enduring capacity of traditional art forms to inspire and shape modern creative endeavors. The artistic approach, encompassing impressionistic and abstract expressionistic interpretations, allowed for a nuanced exploration of how motifs originally conceived for cloth could dictate compositional integrity in a two-dimensional painterly space. This transformative process extends the aesthetic and conceptual dimensions of these motifs beyond their functional textile origins, contributing to the theoretical

and practical expansion of African visual culture within contemporary art discourse. The integration of culturally significant motifs, rooted in Yoruba proverbs, further imbues the artistic exploration of balance and rhythm with profound narrative weight.

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