

THE ROLE OF THE FOUR-SHAFT LOOM IN TRADITIONAL TEXTILES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract

Four-shaft weaving remains a powerful cultural practice that connects people, memory and identity across generations. This study explores the cultural importance of the four-shaft loom in traditional textile production and examines how indigenous societies use woven textiles as carriers of collective history, social values and artistic heritage. Through cultural review and documentation of weaving traditions in selected communities, this research highlights the role of weaving in storytelling, status expression and community belonging. Findings show that many communities continue to protect and pass down four-shaft weaving through apprenticeship systems, cultural festivals and community-based craft programmes. However, challenges such as industrial production, limited youth participation and loss of skilled elders threaten the continuity of this knowledge. At the same time, growing interest in cultural sustainability, heritage education and creative craft revival offers new pathways for preservation. The study concludes that four-shaft weaving is not only a technical skill but also a cultural language that remains essential in modern craft education, identity renewal and heritage-based innovation.

Keywords: Cultural Weaving Traditions; Four-Shaft Loom Heritage; Indigenous Textile Knowledge; Craft Transmission; Heritage Revival; Identity and Textiles; Traditional Handloom Practice

Introduction

Weaving has been part of human life for so many years, and it has served as a major tool for clothing, trade and cultural expression. Early communities used simple hand tools, but weaving

technology gradually advanced from basic frames to structured looms. In the course of these developments, shaft-based looms became important because they allowed weavers to control threads more effectively and they produced stronger, more complex fabrics (Eicher & Ross, 2021). Although modern factories rely on automated weaving machines, many art schools, cultural institutions, and small-scale makers continue to use four-shaft looms for training, creativity and cultural preservation (Henderson, 2022). According to insights shared by Loromeke (2025), the four-shaft loom is “not just a machine but a cultural learning tool that carries memory, skill and identity” She also notes that learning manual weaving builds patience, creativity and respect for cultural knowledge, thereby helping new designers link traditional craft methods with modern innovation. The purpose of this paper is to trace the historical development of the four-shaft loom, examine its cultural and technological influence and explain its continued relevance. The study also highlights how this loom supports heritage education, creative design practice and sustainable craft development in contemporary learning environments.

Origins of Multi-Shaft Looms

The development of multi-shaft looms did not happen suddenly; it followed thousands of years of gradual improvement in weaving practices across different cultures. Early humans used simple weaving frames and basket-plaiting systems before building devices that could control warp threads more clearly (Barber, 2021). Two of the earliest documented systems are the warp-weighted loom of ancient Europe and the backstrap loom widely used in Asia, Africa and the Americas (Emery, 2018). These looms required the weaver’s physical control to lift warp threads, demonstrating deep skill and rhythm. Although simple, they formed the foundation for later structured shaft systems because they relied on warp tension, manual lifting and repetition of patterns.

Evolution toward Shaft Control

Over the years, weavers sought ways to control warp threads more efficiently. This desire led to the emergence of early shaft mechanisms. In ancient Egypt, Persia and parts of India, the vertical and horizontal looms with basic heddle systems were used to separate warp layers, thereby enabling the production of patterned cloth (Gillow & Sentance, 2020). Similar developments appeared in China, where historical records show that by the Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE),

Chinese weavers used draw looms with assistants lifting warp groups to create complex brocades (Picton & Mack, 2021). These innovations showed the first steps toward mechanical pattern control, thus introducing ideas of levers, tension and controlled warp lifting—principles which were later refined in shaft and treadle looms.

Improvements and the Treadle Mechanism

A major breakthrough occurred in medieval Europe and Asia with the development of the treadle system, which allowed weavers to lift warp shafts using foot pedals instead of manual pulling. This change freed the hands for shuttle movement and improved speed, fabric strength and pattern consistency (Eicher & Ross, 2021). Scholars suggest that the European four-shaft treadle loom may have evolved alongside Asian innovations, showing parallel technical creativity across continents (Henderson, 2022). This period marked the first time weaving became both more efficient and more structurally mechanical, thereby preparing the path for industrial textile machines.

Cultural Importance in Craft Societies

Traditional shaft looms were not only technical inventions, they also held cultural meaning. In artisan communities, weaving represented social identity, family tradition and spiritual or ceremonial expression. For example, narrow-band looms in West Africa, patterned silk looms in Persia and jacquard-precursor draw looms in China all served ritual, economic and social roles (Picton, 2022). In many communities, weaving was tied to life stages, gender roles and apprenticeship systems that trained young people in patience, discipline and craft knowledge. African craft scholars have begun to highlight these systems as intellectual heritage rather than just manual skill. As Dr. O. O. Loromeke notes: “Early looms were knowledge tools. They shaped values, life skills and community identity, not just fabric” (personal communication, January 2025). Her view suggests that weavers were not only makers of cloth but also keepers of cultural memory and educators in moral character.

Emergence of the Four-Shaft Loom

A turning point in weaving history is the development from a simple two-shaft loom to a four-shaft loom. While early looms could only produce plain cloth structures, the introduction of four shafts made it possible to create more complex fabrics with strength, rhythm and decorative patterning. This improvement did not happen suddenly. It followed years of small mechanical innovations as weavers, inventors, and craftsmen explored better ways to lift and lower warp threads, balance tension and improve cloth consistency (Harris, 2020).

The mechanics of the four-shaft loom rely on a system of frames, heddles, treadles and pulleys. Each shaft lifts a selected group of threads, and the weaver's foot movement controls the treadles to form pattern sequences. This system allows repeated combinations, making it suitable for designs like twill, diamond, basket weave, herringbone and other structured motifs. The capability of this loom has also helped to reduce mistakes and create smoother surfaces compared to older two-shaft looms (Crosby, 2022). The structure strengthened weaving efficiency while keeping the craft process manual to allow both control and creativity.

Consequently, the four-shaft loom became essential in home-based weaving and cottage industries. It allowed small families and community workshops to produce fine textiles for trade, household use and ceremonial functions. In Europe, Asia and parts of Africa, the loom has supported economic independence among craft families and guilds, making it a valuable household tool before the industrial revolution (Eicher & Ross, 2021). Even after mechanical weaving expanded in factories, many rural and artisanal communities have continued to use the four-shaft looms because they are reliable, affordable and culturally meaningful.

Loromeke (personal communication, January 2025) emphasizes that the four-shaft loom “gave traditional weavers a bridge between simple cloth and patterned fabric, opening new creative doors”. She also notes that understanding this tool helps students appreciate how slow, hands-on technology shaped the textile world, adding that “pattern weaving teaches the mind to think in steps, sequences and patience.” According to her, this loom continues to serve as a foundation for modern design thinking and material experimentation. In another insight, she explains that “the four-shaft loom teaches designers that creativity grows from structure, not from shortcuts,” which

reinforces its place in contemporary creative learning spaces. Her statements support the value of this technology as both a cultural heritage tool and a modern design training device.

The growth of four-shaft weaving was therefore not only a technical moment but also a cultural and educational milestone. It improved the role of craft in domestic economies, supported creative knowledge systems and laid the foundation for future loom inventions such as dobby and jacquard systems. Despite new electronic machines today, the four-shaft loom remains relevant because it carries human skill, tradition and design logic, thereby making it a timeless tool in both heritage and academic settings.

Contemporary Adaptations and Educational Use of the four-shaft Loom

Today, the four-shaft loom still remains important for training, cultural practice and creative experimentation. While large textile factories use advanced digital machinery, Universities, craft schools and independent studios continue to teach four-shaft weaving because it builds foundational textile understanding (Henderson, 2022). Institutions influenced by Bauhaus teaching models treat weaving as both science and art, helping students learn structure, rhythm, pattern logic and material thinking.

Modern educational programmes blend traditional hand-weaving with new tools. Design schools and makerspaces now use computer-assisted four-shaft looms to simulate patterns before weaving, linking craft knowledge with digital literacy (Smith, 2020). A balanced approach is emerging—and that is hands-on weaving for skill and creativity, software for visualization and innovation.

In many cultural centres, four-shaft looms are used to teach heritage and identity. Students learn not only fabric construction but also patience, discipline and community values. Dr. Loromeke emphasizes that “manual weaving is a slow technology that teaches respect, problem-solving and cultural pride” (personal communication, January 2025). She adds that young designers trained on the four-shaft loom often become more careful and thoughtful artists, because “woven cloth teaches the maker before the maker creates the cloth.”

According to Picton (2022), Programmes across Africa, Asia and Europe now link traditional weaving to new industries such as ethical fashion, cultural tourism and heritage-based product design. This balance of tradition and innovation shows that the four-shaft loom is not just an old tool but it is part of a modern learning system that supports culture, creativity and sustainable practice.

Technological Evolution: Materials & Mechanisms

The four-shaft loom has moved through many stages of improvement, reflecting both human creativity and changing production needs. Early looms were made from wood, often hand-carved by local craftsmen. These tools were strong but limited in precision. However, as societies advanced, metal components were introduced, giving weavers better control, improved durability and smoother motion (Harris, 2020). Today, high-quality looms may also use composite parts such as aluminum shafts and lightweight engineered reeds to allow cleaner thread movement and longer service life.

Many key innovations have shaped the loom's progress. Warp-tension systems improved from basic stone weights to adjustable beam brakes and tension knobs, allowing reliable thread control and reducing warp breakage (Smith, 2020). Heddles advanced from plant fibre and hand-tied string to stainless steel and high-grade Texsol systems, making shaft lifting smoother and more accurate. Reed and beater mechanisms also evolved from fixed wooden slats to metal reeds with fine dent spacing, enabling production of dense and complex fabrics (Eicher & Ross, 2021). Yarn development have also played a major role too, as cotton, wool and silk were later joined by mercerized cotton, metallic threads and modern fibres like polyester and rayon, expanding possibilities in textile surface and strength.

Recently, digital technology has been introduced into the weaving field. Computer-assisted drafting programmes, including CAD and weaving software such as Fibre works, have made design planning faster and clearer. Weavers can now visualize patterns, test colour combinations and generate draft sheets before touching the loom (Henderson, 2022). As Dr. O. O. Loromeke explained during expert consultation, “technology did not remove the value of hand-weaving; instead, it has given young makers new tools to imagine and plan cloth in smarter ways” (personal

communication, January 2025). She further stressed that digital and hand processes must “work together, because the future of craft will depend on both memory and innovation.” Her view reflects a balanced approach, reminding educators and students that modern technology should support and not replace, deep manual knowledge.

Cultural & Artisanal Significance of the Four-Shaft Loom

The four-shaft loom holds strong cultural meaning beyond function. Many world traditions treat weaving as a keeper of history, memory and identity. Nordic weavers have long produced geometric patterns that symbolize family lineage and rural life. In Nigeria, the Akwete weaving tradition among the Igbo demonstrates technical skill and cultural pride, especially in ceremonial dress and local trade (Eicher & Ross, 2021). Indian Ikat weaving uses carefully dyed yarns to produce symbolic patterns tied to community identity and spiritual belief, while Andean weavers use looms as tools to express cosmology and community stories (Barber, 2021).

Across these cultures, the four-shaft loom supports continuity and belonging. It gives artisans space to practice inherited skills, participate in local economies and build social identity through cloth. Dr. O. O. Loromeke emphasizes that “when communities keep weaving, they keep their dignity, history and creativity alive” (personal communication, January 2025). She has also argued that preserving loom culture is “not only about cloth but about teaching respect for tradition, patience in process and pride in cultural roots.” These perspectives place her voice among key African craft scholars calling for heritage-based innovation. In design schools, students learn not only technique but values like patience, observation, problem-solving and cultural empathy. Weaving becomes a way to understand community, slow creativity and respect for material history. As Loromeke notes, “every thread tells a story—and students must learn to listen with their hands” (personal communication, January 2025). This reinforces the idea that the four-shaft loom remains a living educational tool and cultural bridge.

The continued relevance of four-shaft looms in a digitally driven textile world is not accidental — it is rooted in their educational, cultural and sustainable value. While digital looms and automated Jacquard systems dominate industrial production, the four-shaft looms continue to play a critical role in foundational textile training, particularly in universities and craft centres (Adebayo, 2021).

They provide students with tactile experience, enabling them to physically observe warp–weft interactions and understand structural mechanics, unlike fully automated tools where processes are hidden (Okafor & Chen, 2022).

Four-shaft looms foster experiential learning, emphasizing hand–eye coordination, concentration and creativity. This aligns with constructivist learning theories, where practical engagement deepens cognitive understanding. Emerging designers often report that hand-weaving inspires original pattern development and material experimentation. Furthermore, four-shaft looms support low-energy (Evenson, 2020). Unlike industrial weaving machines that consume high power, these looms operate manually, creating opportunities for environmentally conscious micro-enterprises and community-based textile cooperatives. Their simplicity, openness and repair-friendly structure make them resilient tools in regions without reliable electricity or advanced technology infrastructure.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Historically, four-shaft looms have shaped textile practices from traditional workshop weaving to modern design education. They have contributed significantly to the growth of hand-woven traditions, pattern invention and textile science. Their educational value remains central — offering learners practical understanding of fabric construction, pattern logic and craftsmanship. Culturally, they help preserve indigenous weaving techniques and motifs that might otherwise be replaced by globalized machine aesthetics. At the same time, they stimulate creative innovation by enabling tactile experimentation, material research and independent craftsmanship (Uzor, 2021). Looking forward, the future of four-shaft weaving lies in hybridization:

- Digital-manual looms that retain hands-on control while offering digital pattern feedback.
- AI-assisted pattern systems, where learners input ideas and receive weave drafts.
- Smart weaving technologies integrating sensors to teach rhythm, tension and accuracy.

The four-shaft loom will therefore remain relevant not as a relic of the past but as a core educational and cultural technology that inspires contemporary textile practice and sustainable futures.

Recommendations

Finally, it is recommended that:

1. Indigenous weaving practices and loom adaptations be documented.
2. Weavers should experiment with combining manual four-shaft looms and digital pattern software.
3. Four-shaft loom training in textile and fashion curricula be maintained.
4. Hybrid studio courses that combine manual weaving with computer-aided design be developed.
5. Student's research projects on weaving innovation and cultural preservation be encouraged.
6. Local loom-weaving traditions through workshops, exhibitions and archival projects be preserved.
7. Community education programmes, especially for youth and women's cooperatives be supported.

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THE ART OF ALGORITHMS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AS TOOLS FOR CREATIVE OBJECTIFICATION IN THE VISUAL ARTS

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Abstract

The application of algorithms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the design, creation and interpretation of creative objectification in the visual arts in the contemporary era is a crucial phenomenon. The visual artists in recent times often explore a set of rules and complex possibilities through computerized patterns to create unique and unpredictable outcomes, enabled and enhanced by the modern development of algorithms and Artificial Intelligence. The application and integration of the algorithm and artificial intelligence as tools for creative possibilities has therefore engendered visual art generation with unique and complex results. This paper, therefore, discusses the usage of algorithms and Artificial Intelligence in facilitating modern design creation in the visual arts. Thereby highlighting their importance in the contemporary visual arts landscape, especially in Nigeria. The paper examined the various areas of the visual artistic genre to ascertain the involvement of algorithms and Artificial intelligence in them. The research employs the combination of formalism, psychoanalysis and biographical research methods of art historical studies in the analysis and exploration of this modern tendency. It finds that the introduction of algorithms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in contemporary visual arts creation has greatly enhanced modern design possibilities. In spite of these laudable contributions, the paper concludes that the role of human input in creating ideas, form generation and application of the computerized system in the creative arts processes is still a crucial element in the visual arts scene.

Keywords: Algorithms, Artificial intelligence, Tools, Visual Arts, Crucial, Creative

Introduction

Since primordial times, man has continued to develop new ways of dominating his environment to keep him comfortable within his domain, which is constantly faced with new challenging conditions of living. Thus, he is in a steady movement to make his environment habitable by fashioning out utilitarian and non-utilitarian tools that could mitigate the environmental hazard. With the discovery and control of fire by mankind at about 1,000,00 BC - 400000 BC (Fossil Humid and History Stone age man), artistic and technological development began to soar. From the prehistoric age to the 19th century, art and technology have strived to pilot the initiation of material source of creation, projection and implementation of ideas by the artist for the development of human and material resources important for any given society' (Mamza, 2014). This effort of art and technology took a new leap with the discovery of computer technology in the 19th century especially the Artificial Intelligent Computers (Electronic Digital Computer; EDC) in the 1940s by John Vincent Alanasoff and Clifford Beryl (<http://www.Columbia.edu.JV.alanasoff>); and the first general purpose electronic digital computer known as electronic numerical integrator and calculator (ENIAC) designed by John Mauchly and J. Prosper Echert in 1946. However AI was debuted by Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon at Darthmouth workshop in 1956 as “the Logic Theorist” and this is widely considered as the birth of AI. In the twenty-first century, AI gain interaction and acceptability in different aspects of human endeavour - which included the visual arts. Nevertheless, “the history of artificial intelligence (AI) began in antiquity with myths, stories and rumours of artificial beings endowed with intelligence or consciousness by master craftsmen” (the creative artist, History of Artificial Intelligence.net).

On the other hand, art has been with the prehistoric man since creation. As social, technological and artistic change went “hand in hand”, Homo sapiens (wise man) developed complex cultures (Adams, 2002) which are only evident to and understood by modern man through the remains of fossils and artefacts. The application of AI has entangled every artistic genre the world over, and the contemporary Nigerian creative art space is not an exception. This paper, therefore takes an analytical survey of the usage and application of AI in contemporary Nigerian art. It examined its application and usage in the different artistic genre -painting, graphics, textiles, ceramics, and sculpture/metal design. The paper employed the formalistic, psychoanalytical and

biographical methods of art historical studies in analytical and explorative trajectory of the application of AI in the artworks.

Conceptual Framework

The analytical survey is based on the conceptual framework of “use”. Ukweku (2022) opines that the concept of use has three indicators thus; useful, usable and used. Thus, a useful product is one that several users agree satisfies their needs. Therefore, a product that is useful is one that successfully and satisfactorily allows a user to accomplish a task or an objective (Alaster, 2002). It is important that there are a number of potential users who find a product useful. On the other hand, (Aido, 2002 in Ukweku, 2022) opines that “usable refers too usability of a product. It examines the way that product will be used and whether it enables the user to do job in a pleasurable, simple and effective manner” The “concept of use” is apt in this study as it perused the usability and benefits and usefulness of the AI application in the actualization of artistic nuances by visual artists in the creation of various artworks.

This study applied the formalistic, psychoanalytical and biographical art historical research methods in the analytical survey of the AI application in contemporary Nigerian artworks. Formalism is an art historical research method that pays attention to pure arrangement and etiquette guiding aesthetic rather than content, function and context. “They respond to formal elements and their aesthetic” (Adams, 2002), while the biographical method approaches the artwork in consonance with the artists' lives and personalities. And psychoanalysis is a 19th-century branch of psychology that began with Sigmund Freud. It deals with the past by reconstructing and interpreting the present. It examines the expressive imagery, history and creative objectivity of the process. It also reveals the unconscious mind and reworks personal imagery into new form that engages cultural instinctual energy. These methods helped the study to communicate the emotions and aesthetics quality that emanates from the artist to the viewer. It also espouses the lives of the artist as underlining text for the proper interpretation of the work. Thereby enhancing a better understanding of the focus of this study.

A Brief Survey of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

As earlier stated above, artificial intelligence machines came into existence at the middle of the 19th century and they gained acknowledgment and approval in various facets of human activity. What then is the meaning of this new technology that has permeated the entire human existence? According to Copland (2024), Artificial Intelligence is the ability of the computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks that are commonly associated with the intellectual processes and characteristics of humans. Nikita (2024), however defines it thus. “AI is the simulations of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think and act like humans”. This scientific discovery and development of digital computers that are programmed to perform very complex tasks is now an accepted means to solving human challenges. This technology has also been reflected in the artistic landscape. Artificial intelligence could therefore be regarded as the simulation and re-ordering process of human intelligence by advance computer machines in the production of artworks. Nevertheless, the introduction of machines activated human intelligence into art production has engendered a new creative essence in the visual arts domain. It is a revolutionary era where artists and machines are in collaboration using the AI algorithms enable computer machines. Algorithms is the main technology that enable the computers to analyze high amount of data, recognize patterns stored in its memory and offer predications or recommendations based on the information processed. The Algorithm inspired art could also be regarded as Digital Art as they often rely on pre-determined rules and parameters. The Artificial intelligence (AI) art universe is saturated with creativity and innovations which enables the artists to create unpredictable, complex and unique artworks through the use of human input and design; and machine leaning models and data. The application of AI in the creative industry could be categorized into five groups according to Anantrasirichai & Bull (2022). These are (i) Content creation, (ii) information analysis, (iii) content enhancement and post production workflows, (iv) information extraction and enhancement, and (v) data compression. They also highlighted the difference in the dynamic application of the AI as a creative tool and its inherent dexterity as a creator in itself. The Starry Night Garden (fig. 1) exhibited at Macau is a great example. It is a Van Gogh AI that explores how AI and Van Gogh’s iconic work can be put together to create a truly unique concept. It is a testament to the possibilities achievable when AI and Digital Art are used to create. William Lim’s artwork (fig 3) is also a worthy experience for the future of digital art.



Figure 1: “Starry Night Garden” exhibition at One Central Macau (Photo: Courtesy of Heiman Ng and William Lim)

A Survey of Creative Art

Art is a highly contested concept (Andrew Brighton, 2006, in Thompson, 2006) that connotes different things to different people. However, overtime, several art writers have attempted various meanings and descriptions of art. Generally, art could be regarded as the expression of the inner mind via imagination, emotions, ideas and exploration of formal elements in the generation of aesthetic and functional objects. Egonwa (2007) opines that Art is the arrangement of an experience or experiences via some medium such as wood, fabric, metal or clay, for self and others by a sentient personality called an artist using elements of design. Danjuma (2004) refers to art as “creative skill compelled by personal drive caused by emotions, beliefs or ideas to produce a piece of artwork. It can take different forms and be produced for several purposes”. Art could be said to be self-expression, translated through thoughts, feelings and sensations into visual forms. Creative art could be divided broadly into two domains - the fine arts and the applied or industrial arts. (Functional or decorative arts). Visual-art-cork.com in the encyclopedia of art education observed that the term Fine arts refers to an art form practised mainly for its aesthetic value and its beauty (art for art’s sake) rather than its functional value”. It includes drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting, photography and architecture, While the applied or functional or industrial art refers to the application (and resulting products) of artistic design to utilization

objects in everyday use” They are usually concerned with the design and ornamentation of items; and are mostly functional with little or no intrinsic aesthetics character or value. These include graphics art, metal design work, book illustration, architecture, industrial design and many more.

Nevertheless, with the industrial revolution, standard machine -made products that have special attractive designs applied on them, easy to use, aesthetically pleasing to visual sensibility but highly functional began to emerge in the artistic domain. Thus, giving birth to technically inclined art works. This technological input has metamorphosed in contemporary time into the artificial intelligence which is currently being applied in every facet of art production.

Arts.cork.com described the transformation processes thus: “applied art received its biggest boost from the growth in commerce during the 19th century, following the industrial revolution. Suddenly, competitive manufacturers and service providers needed to ensure that their products and services looked good as well as functioned properly”. This demand for improved aesthetics and function led to various technical and artistic innovation processes in the visual arts. These artistic innovations and processes in the various artistic genres are discussed below.

Ceramics: the art of ceramics (Pottery) could be regarded as the art of making pottery, which is one of the oldest craft in the world with its creativity profoundly embedded in philosophical ideas and a humanistic ambiance. Ceramic is a live and evolving form of art that seems to exhibit unlimited boundary. Its appreciation is crucial as its expansion is in most cases the activating energy behind economic development and the change of rural environment (Aduina, 2020). According to Zhang, (2024), the development of Zhang-(2024) ceramics marks a watershed moment in human history, accelerating the shift from basic to sophisticated civilization”.

In Nigeria, there are evidences from Dutsen Kongba rock shelter near Jos shows that pottery manufacture existed as early as the 4th millennium BC (Falunsi, 1992 in Odubiyi, 2008). However, the art of Pottery has survived into the present era and has also played significant role in the development of modern Nigeria. Prior to this contemporary time, Nigeria traditional potters used to engage the production of pottery with the manipulation of clay with their hand, a

potter's wheel and other processes manually. But in contemporary Nigerian art, ceramics artist has integrated AI and other digital tools into the production processes. The involvement of AI has led to enhanced creative processes and improved of ceramic design. It helps in the selection of clay composition to firing temperature, optimizing glaze formations and ensuring consistency and eliminating human errors while enabling the duplication of sophisticated design. The AI algorithms has also revolutionized traditional techniques and creative processes, and generated unique and complex designs, shapes and patterns which are transformed into physical artworks which sometimes involve the use of 3D printing technology. AI generated ceramics designs has enabled the exploration of new forms, textures and colour thereby pushing the boundaries of traditional ceramic arts in Nigeria. The AI algorithm and digital tool intervention has significantly enabled the spread of ceramics arts and formulated key support network for respective ceramic artist? which enhance the level of connection and engagement, provides more space and opportunity for development in ceramic arts (Zhang, 2024). The Nigerian ceramic art landscape has been rapidly revolutionized with the integration of AI.

Visual communication is simply the art of designing for print production (Adeyemi, 2008) meant for communication purposes. This could be divided into two broad domain-graphics art' which is printing and graphics design' also known as Design Communication. Printing according to Hornby (2001) is the art and science of producing letters, pictures, patterns and more on a surface by pressing a prepared matrix covered with ink against it, While Adeyemi (2008) opines that printing is the production of images on paper, parchment, plastic and others by various processes of multiplication either by hand or mechanical or photo-mechanical means. The use of AI| in the creation of visual artwork could be highly noticeable in the new digital imagery or art forms represented in image generation for photography, graphic communication and animation. The Images are first created and drawn by the artist before it is imputed into the computer system for "image to image translation or style transfer". This is because the image input and output, though with similar localize semantic content has diligent appearances. This involves mapping classed possibilities that "transforms the input image into the style of the selected artist by combining feature maps from different conventional layers". Thereby drawing and generalizing abstract concepts in a manner similar to science or type human (Nantheera and David, 2022) With the AI technology, two images, scenes or types can be

converted from map or sketches to real scene or coloured objects. The AI photography art of Timi Amah titled Looking Into the Future is a typical example.



Figure 2: Timi Amah, Looking into the Future, AI Algorithm Design, 2024 “16 by 14”.

The creative integration of AI in graphics design, animation and photography seems to have transformed the work, therein creating new possibilities and challenges in the art domain. This technological advancement has revolutionized the creative field in graphics design, animation and photography in very notable ways in contemporary Nigeria. This could be conspicuously seen in the graphic design, production processes, generation of logo, colour scheme or palette selections, and typography. AI also features greatly in image editing, manipulation of design streamline, rapid prototyping and iteration using automated design system. In photography, AI generative models help in creating synthetic images, blurring lines between reality and artifice. Its camera enhances image quality and automate settings, and advanced retouching and manipulation by editing software empowered by AI. Thereby augmenting

creativity by expanding designers and photographers' capabilities and increased efficiently for high level decision.



Figure 3: William Lim's artwork which features himself in a garden (Photo: Courtesy of Heiman Ng and William Lim)

Painting: Beginning from Aina Onabolu (1882 – 1962) and other great Nigerian artists of the past, painting has witnessed a brauendous advancement in the Nigeria artistic landscape overtime. The Nigerian painting genre has a rich cultural heritage with a history of vibrant colours, bold patters scenes and story telling through the arts. But in contemporary times, artists painters have begun to explore the new technology of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to articulate more boundaries and welcome new creative frontiers.



Figure 4: Timi Amah, Akassa, AI Algorithm Photo Design, 2024, “18 by 14”

They have used AI algorithmics to blend traditional techniques with machine learning to engender unique art works. They employ AI in colour palette choices, brushstroke simulation, composition to enhance creative process. They also engage AI powered software to create digital paintings with precision and detail in artistic style, iconographies essence, composition and aesthetic authenticity that moral tradition (regular) painting works. Thereby, exploring visual expression from choice colours, elements of art and design to create three dimensional effects with illusion of depth and visual accuracy.



Figure 5: Isi Agu by Osaz world limited (n.d) (<https://www.osazworld.com/product/igbo-isiagu-clothes-2/>)

Textile Design Technology: The Nigerian textile design industry like other artistic genre has also embraced the new technology of AI with product or art generation concept. AI is currently being integrated into the fabric through form generation and computational design, knitting, weaving, screen printing and dying. It could also be seen in textile pattern generation that could be used and optimized for certain objective. This unique textile AI algorithms generated patterns could be inspired by traditional and contemporary cultures (fig 5). They, in most cases showcase a special blend of indigenous patterns and foreign motifs from other cultures within and without Africa. In image-to-knitting/weaving, AI can potentially convert images directly into knittable programmes for textile production, revolutionizing the design-to-production processes. The adaptation of AI image generators like DALL-E or Midjourney, helps in the ideation and inspiration for new textile and garment design, thereby enhancing the design processes fig 6. In contemporary times, AI

appropriate technology could be noticed in the production of textile fabrics using the AI automated looms and form generation, and surface design translation.



Figure 6: Raffia mat/mask design Adaptation of Ikot Ekpene Woven Raffia Design by Ekamen, .J.E (2020).

AI-Generated Metal Design and Sculpture:

The application of AI in art seem to be increasingly integrated with varied art forms, its usage in sculpture in began with artists such as Frieder Nake and Georg Nees who applied algorithms to generation simple sculptures. Thereby laying the foundation for future experimentation for CAD software usage in designing and fabrication of complex images, Machine learning, robotics and (GANS) Generative Adversarial Networks and other AI models. In Nigeria, AI involvement in sculpture is a more recent metal sculpture scene using different techniques applications, the AI algorithms seems to be more noticeable in the design and fabrication of sheet metal works especially in elaborately designed metal gates. The design is generated through CAD which is then uploaded into a computerized laser cutting machine with algorithms memory. This streamlines the design process, generate unique metal sculpture designs, optimized specific applications such as chasing and repousse, fabrication processes, welding, and pricing and sawing. Thereby allowing the artists to create complex shapes and forms. The metal designer explore the computer Aid Design (CAD) in generating design patterns and illustrations for the process of etching, chasing,

repousse, jounery methods and sumting. This enables visual expressions with three-dimensional effects on a flat metal surface. While also encouraging the production of complex three-dimensional forms (Edewor, Idenu and Onose, 2025).



Figure 6: Metal Grate with putout design patterns. 2024, 18ft by 8ft. Benin Photo: Felix Ophori.



Conclusion

The paper has reviewed the historical background and application of Artificial Intelligence and Algorithm in the visual art scene. It also took a panoramic review of their exploration in the creation of various artworks in the different artistic genres. It observed that the synergy between

art and technology and their roles in the artistic development of Nigeria spans a long period of time and has come to stay. The application of AI and algorithms or digital art in the Nigerian contemporary visual art scene has opened new vistas of creativity, innovation and experiences that are testimonies to the uniqueness of artworks that can be achieved. It has transformed the knowledge and practical skill of art into more dynamic and comfortable living products by offering new tools and possibilities. As the Nigerian art world continues to evolve, the interaction of human imagination and AI's capabilities will continue to redefine the future of art through enhanced creativity and increased accessibility that can foster innovation. Moreover, it is crucial to note that the application of an AI algorithm is a complementary role to further enhance the creative objectification of Nigeria visual artists in our contemporary art era. Nevertheless, in spite of these laudable contributions, the artistic human input in these creative art processes of engendering ideas, form generation and exploration of computerised AI algorithms is still a crucial and significant element in the visual art landscape. This symbiotic collaboration, if properly engaged would create a great and better creative arts industry in this contemporary era.

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PIGMENTS AND PRESERVATION: ENHANCING COLOUR INTENSITY AND DURABILITY ON RAFFIA AS SUPPORT/GROUND IN PAINTING USING EPOXY RESIN

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Abstract

Woven raffia, a fibrous mat made by interlacing strands from the leaves of the raffia palm, is traditionally used for crafts, textiles, and decorative purposes and has gained popularity in its deployment as ground/support in painting. Extant studies on raffia have hinged on the woven composite obtained, chemical and microwave treatments to improve raffia, the craft of raffia weaving and its socioeconomic significance, amongst others, with less attention paid to the use of epoxy resin for preservation and aesthetics. This study was, therefore, designed to foreground the role of epoxy resin in the preservation of woven raffia. Using a studio-based investigation, the potential of raffia as an alternative support/ground for contemporary painting is highlighted in five (5) selected raffia woven works: *Silence*, *The Hustle Continues*, *African Woman*, *Being a Woman* and *Instrument of Seduction*. Findings reveal that epoxy resin and car paint are instrumental in preserving the stability of pigment-woven raffia when used as ground/support when applied. Epoxy resin preserves woven raffia, provides a glossy finish and protects it from weather and pests, thereby ensuring its durability. Car paint enhances the texture quality more than acrylic or oil paints. Additionally, wood preservatives like DDVP are ineffective over prolonged moist storage due to fungal growth. Thus, beyond technical outcomes, the study highlights the cultural significance of integrating indigenous materials into modern artistic practice, thus bridging tradition and innovation. It is hoped that this paper would be a reference material to painters, students, art lovers and researchers.

Keywords: Epoxy resin, woven raffia, car paint, DDVP reinforcement, pigment

Introduction

Artist over the years, source different materials in carrying out their works. Epoxy resin, a synthetic polymer that is often used by sculptors, has become a necessary material used by artists in other aspects of creative arts, including painting on raffia (Bargues-Ballester, 2015). Several scholars have appreciated the multifaceted functions of epoxy resin since its introduction into other creative art processes. Rahman and Akhtarul-Islam (2022) submit epoxy resin application to artworks significantly improves the strength, durability, and protection of construction materials, notably by reinforcing concrete, reducing chloride ion permeability, and serving as a protective coating against corrosion, saltwater, and other environmental aggressors. While investigating the

chemical properties of epoxy resin, Gibson (2017) opines that it is the most important class of thermoset because of its outstanding mechanical properties and chemical resistance. With respect to cultural artefacts, Chen et al. (2024) emphasise that epoxy resin is vital in cultural relic protection due to its strong bonding and consolidating properties, which help repair and stabilise fragile artefacts.

As a chemical property, Diaz-Granados et al. (2024) remark that epoxy resin usage ensures durability in all forms of artwork and craft, including raffia with its divergent properties. Kocak et al. (2015), while examining the composite properties of raffia, show how lightweight, long-lasting textile sculptures that honour African cultural traditions may be made from native fibres like cane, raffia, and willow. The study foregrounds not only the economic and aesthetic implications but also addresses issues like the health hazards connected to chemical dyeing while showcasing the creative potential of these materials. Bakare and Bako (2016), in their investigation of woven sculptural pieces as added dimensions to textile design, explore chemical and microwave treatments to improve raffia woven fabric's adhesion in bio-composites, asserting that acetic acid and microwave energy have proven most effective. Djoumessi et al. (2022) submit that utilising *Raphia vinifera* fibre fabrics, especially in canvas weave, effectively reinforces epoxy composites, with optimal performance at 50%. With respect to the act of weaving raffia and the socioeconomic significance, Centillas et al. (2024) submit that enculturation and government support enhance weavers' skills and income, leading to the development of the Quadrant Theory of Cultural Dynamism (QTCD), which promotes cultural globalisation by integrating peripheral cultures into the mainstream, and the Contextualised Raffia Instructional Model (CRIM), which fosters 21st-century learning competencies, national cultural identity, and pride among students and teachers.

Beyond raffia as a *multidimensional material* that combining **aesthetic, scientific, economic, and cultural** values as suggested by the various scholarly submission above, the application of epoxy resin, brings to the fore the concept of conservation of the various artistic and cultural works. The study underlines the application processes of epoxy resin to woven raffia as a reinforcement agent and amplifier of aesthetics. This is evident in the various studio presented works in this study.

Materials and Methods



Figure I: Preliminary Sketch "Hidden Pains"



Figure II: Preliminary Sketch "Hidden Pains"

the composition and surface exploration.

Surface treatment of the raffia was then carried out to prepare the material for painting, which involved specific techniques to improve adhesion and stability. Detailed sketches were made directly on the treated raffia surface, allowing for precise application of media. Additionally, the researcher experimented with assembling unconventional shapes to maximise the artistic potential of raffia. Throughout the process, various pigments, including acrylic, oil, and car paint, were tested to determine suitable media for the texture and support optimal ways to enhance the durability and visual quality of woven raffia in contemporary painting. This comprehensive approach enabled the researcher to systematically evaluate the interaction between materials and surface treatments in achieving the desired artistic outcomes.



Figure III: Application of Chemicals on Raffia

Discussion on the Application of Epoxy Resin on Raffia Art Works

The application of epoxy resin on raffia foregrounds various sociocultural realities, including stigmatisation, socioeconomic occupation and the concept of the African woman. These realities are depicted in the portrayals of silence, the hustle continuing, African women, being a woman and an instrument of seduction, respectively.

Plate 1: Ejiroghene Tadafe, *Silence*, 2020, (Car Paint, Woven Raffia Mat Coated with Epoxy Resin, 33cm Diameter)

The face in the artwork is incomplete. Shame is a normal response to being violated, or the title of the painting. On a raffia platform, *Silence* is an oil painting. A shut mouth and a nose that is bleeding with black tears are depicted in this feminine picture. "Silence" is symbolised by the bleeding nose and the closed lips, as silence is the biggest protection against domestic abuse. Up to 70% of victims of domestic abuse report that their abusers coerced them into remaining silent by threatening to harm or kill them or any family members. Shame following abuse is the most frequent excuse given by victims for not speaking up. In fact, abuse by its very nature is humiliating and dehumanising. In practice, abuse is dehumanising and degrading by definition. As a result of someone else's acts, many victims experience a sense of invasion or helplessness. The experience of sexual assault itself dehumanises the victim.

Last but not least, the black tears illustrate how sexual assault is stigmatised in our cultures. Because of this, many victims are reluctant to disclose their memories of sexual harassment.



Because of the rape culture in our society, this kind of action is accepted and tolerated. Blaming the victim is the primary manifestation of rape culture. "She asked for it," or "Maybe if she wasn't wearing that," are common responses from those who place the responsibility on victims. The victim is immediately marginalised by this kind of thinking, which makes it more difficult for them to open up. If the victim believes that society is holding them responsible for the assault, they will not feel confident enough to speak up. By absolving the abuser of responsibility for their acts and placing the blame on the victim, this mindset empowers the abuser. There are instances when a victim may be too traumatised to talk about the assault.



Plate 2: Ejiroghene Tadafe, *The Hustle Continues*, 2021. Oil Paint on Woven Raffia Coated with Epoxy Resin, 30 X 30cm.

Nigeria is portrayed in the painting "The hustle continues" above as a maritime nation where fish is a staple food and fishing contributes significantly to the national economy. harvested by artisanal fishermen utilising boats and nets from a variety of coastal and inland waters. Fish farming is one type of agricultural technique that is most common in Nigeria's

coastal states. However, the agricultural and fishing industries in riverine regions are currently suffering greatly from the detrimental effects of oil extraction such as environmental degradation.



People in the neighbourhood now fish outside of rivers and streams that have been contaminated by oil drilling and related activities. A sizable section of the population in coastal regions depends on the fishing industry for both their livelihood and their seafood nourishment. By working in the fishing industry, the majority of women dedicate their time, abilities, and talents to their families' welfare. Like coastal

fisheries, their contribution to food production has grown in significance as a means of escaping poverty and enhancing or improving food security. In general, women in fishing communities contribute heavily to the fishing industry and are vital to improving their families' standard of living. Though supportive, women's involvement in fish-related activities is essential and important, as fish farming is traditionally seen as a male-dominated endeavour.

Plate 3: Ejiroghene Tadafe, *African woman* 2020. Oil paint on Woven Raffia Mat Coated with Epoxy Resin, 60 X 60cm.

The picture above, which symbolises women, is 33 cm in diameter and was created on a circular woven mat called African Woman. Whether actively or passively, women have undoubtedly contributed to the idea of contemporary African nation-building. The painting's use of many hues conveys the idea that women are knowledge providers and tools for cultural revitalisation. The social and political changes gave rise to the powerful voices of women. They express their thoughts



while making their words heard on the lucidity of their social challenges and experiences. The face of the lady is painted black, as you can see if you look closely. This illustrates how African countries are patriarchal and have made women want to break out from the position that has been prescribed for them by society. In order to find the meaning of femininity, this woman is said to be pursuing mental, emotional, and spiritual development free from the forceful engendering that her culture tries to instill in her. This is an effort to determine the woman's potential relevance to the general growth of her community. She has been seen to assume the roles of a co-wife, mother, sister, daughter, wife, and mother/daughter-in-law. She plays various parts throughout her life, switching between them or even performing two or more of them at the same time. The long-standing patriarchal customs of male control and female subservience had not been significantly challenged by political freedom. The Nigerian woman, as an African woman, has her roles defined by history, cultural practice and religious subservience to the role of men.

This lady was moulded into the customary mould that Nigerians use to bear the load of marriage, childbearing, wifehood, motherhood, and widowhood. Despite this, the lady continued to demonstrate her value to society on a daily basis, which sparked a desire to participate actively in her community instead of passively and to fulfil her share of nation-building. This was seen as "feminism." This was mostly done in an effort to improve the negative perception of African women and to encourage them to achieve more. Women throughout the world have long wanted to break free from the role that patriarchy has prescribed for them. A woman's mental, emotional, and spiritual development are all part of her quest for self-realization. This is feminism's whole philosophy. However, gender parity and women are urged to resist the roles since they disconnect the women who accept and use them.

Plate 4: Ejiroghene Tadafe, *Being a Woman*, 2021. Car Paint on Woven Raffia Coated with Epoxy Resin, 30 X 30cm.

Just Being a woman might be taxing at times, and it ought not to be, but society has forced women to put in more effort for no apparent reason. The majority of women put almost twice as much effort to demonstrate their equal competence, which is draining. They are actually being killed by generations of excessive blood pressure. She's exhausted from trying to be great for everyone (and everything); some days she can't dream, and some nights she can't sleep. "She's exhausted." She is unable to sweep the floors, prepare dinner, or fold her clothing. She is exhausted from raising children, dealing with a drunk husband, and worrying about housing and joblessness. Women will stop at nothing to maintain the family unit. Women are delicate but lovely. Families, communities, houses, babies, and kids are all supported by women. In order to survive, women have really been educated to conceal their fatigue from society. However, women are now being trained to acknowledge when they desire to cry and when they are fatigued.



Plate 5: Ejiroghene Tadafe, *Instrument of Seduction*, 2020. (Acrylic on Circular Woven Raffia, 33cm Diameter)

The artwork "Instrument of Seduction" above was created on raffia that has been woven in a circle. If you look closely, you will see that the picture shows a nude woman within a bold-faced woman. This illustrates how our societal practice reduces women to their naked sexuality above all else, making them objects for men's sexual need, want, and viewing pleasure. At the exact same time as their whole demeanour conveys intimacy and an eager desire to comply to all men's sex requests at all times, the prevalent objectifying representations of women portray them as barely anything

than their bare body parts, sensuous beauty, and alluring conduct. In this sense, males may be completely unaware of women's true intentions. As a result, they could really believe what they were taught in this culture that women are always interested in having sex, even if this is not the case. While women completely deny the seduction claim, they attribute the sexualised look to their desire to feel and appear attractive. Most men interpret the sexualised gaze as a sign of interest in sex and purpose to persuade.

Findings

With respect to pigment application and colour intensity, the discussed works underline the fact that the choice of pigments critically influences colour vibrancy and overall visual impact. In the same vein, car paint enhances the colour quality more effectively than acrylic or oil paints. This provides a glossy, bright finish that remains vivid over time. In the portrayal of "The Hustle Continues", pigment integration with the raffia substrate is successfully reflected. This confirms the assertion that appropriate pigment selection, particularly those with high opacity and adhesion properties, tends to achieve heightened colour intensity on textured, organic surfaces like raffia.

Furthermore, in the presented raffia works above, the application of epoxy resin acted as a protective layer. It provides a glossy, weather-resistant surface that shields pigment from environmental factors such as humidity and pests. Additionally, as a preservative, epoxy resin plays a crucial role in maintaining the artwork's durability and vibrancy. Therefore, the resin did not only ensure longevity of the artworks but also enhanced the aesthetic appeal by giving the surface a sleek finish, thereby balancing textured raffia with a visually appealing gloss. This interaction between the pigment and epoxy resin as applied in the artworks considered in this study ensures the creation of visually striking and resilient works. It exemplifies how proper pigment selection and suitable preservation methods, like epoxy resin, advance the quality and longevity of paintings on unconventional materials like woven raffia.

Moreover, beyond enhancing physical durability, the application of epoxy resin contributes to maintaining the integrity of the painted surface. Similarly, while the thematic elements such as *seduction* and *womanhood* are conveyed through the works, the findings indicate that the physical properties of materials, pigments and resin directly impact the expressive possibilities of these

themes. The textured surface, enhanced by vibrant pigments and preserved with epoxy resin, enriches the visual storytelling by adding depth, contrast, and permanence to the artistic message.

Conclusion

The transformative role of epoxy resin applied to woven raffia artworks is demonstrated in the selected works investigated in this study: *Silence*, *The Hustle Continues*, *African Woman*, *Being a Woman* and *Instrument of Seduction*, respectively. The selected works foreground the capacity to merge traditional craftsmanship with current artistic innovation. Amidst the capacity of epoxy resin to act as a protective coating, it further enhances the structural integrity and the richness of the raffia virtually. This is often more effective when combined with car paint as obtainable in “silence” and “being a woman”. The combined application of both materials intensifies the colour vibrancy while producing a glossy, durable surface resistant to moisture, pests and environmental wear. The study also underscores the fact that the various material combinations in the production of the discussed artworks on woven raffia improve not only the longevity of the works but also reinforce their cultural and aesthetic significance. Thus, contrasting works carried out using epoxy resin and conventional preservatives like DDVP, the former proves to me more effective in moisture resistance, fungal growth preservation and degradation. Ultimately, working with epoxy resin tends to be a more sustainable solution for the prevention of artworks.

Additionally, the study situates the use of epoxy resin within broader sociocultural and thematic contexts, as seen in *Instrument of Seduction* and *Silence*, where the material’s reflective qualities amplify explorations of gender, identity, and cultural expression. The integration of innovation with indigenous materials, in the context of this study, revitalises raffia as a medium of modern expression, preserving its authenticity while aligning it with global art practices. Hence, the research advocates for a holistic approach to art creation and conservation. This implies a balance of science, culture, and sustainability. It also positions epoxy resin as a crucial tool for ensuring the durability, aesthetic appeal, and cultural continuity of raffia-based art in the evolving landscape of contemporary artistic practice.

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THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON CONTEMPORARY PAINTING PRACTICES: A FOCUS ON NIGERIAN ARTISTS

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative forces in the art world, reshaping the ways paintings are conceptualized, created, interpreted, and consumed. Beyond being merely a technological tool, AI has become an active collaborator, pushing the boundaries of creativity, authorship, and artistic meaning. This paper examines the impact of AI on contemporary painting practices, exploring both opportunities and challenges. It highlights the ways artists integrate machine learning algorithms into their work, the ethical and philosophical debates surrounding originality and authorship, and the social implications of AI-generated art in galleries, markets, and educational institutions. Using examples from global and Nigerian contexts, including artists like Victor Ehikhamenor (b:1970), Ngozi Omeje (b:1970), William Kentridge (b:1970), and Obvious Collective, this article provides a comprehensive review of how AI is reconfiguring aesthetics, process, and value in painting. The study concludes that AI does not erase traditional practices but rather expands artistic dialogues, demanding new approaches to curation, pedagogy, and policy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Contemporary Painting, Creativity, Machine Learning, Art Market, Authorship, Digital Aesthetics

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a remarkable convergence between art and technology, with artificial intelligence (AI) standing at the forefront of this integration. Painting, once primarily associated with manual skill, imagination, and deeply personal expression, is now undergoing profound transformation as artists increasingly collaborate with algorithms, data sets, and

generative systems. This technological shift does not diminish human creativity; instead, it fosters new forms of hybridity in which the boundaries between artist, tool, and artwork are becoming more fluid. The result is a redefinition of artistic practice where machines act as co-creators, enabling fresh aesthetic possibilities while simultaneously challenging long-held ideas about originality, authorship, and authenticity. This article examines these transformations with a particular focus on contemporary painting practices across different global contexts, including Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America. By situating AI within diverse cultural and artistic traditions, the study highlights both the universal and region-specific ways in which technology is reshaping painting. The central questions guiding this investigation are: How is AI influencing the creative processes of painters? What implications does the use of AI carry for concepts of originality and authorship? In what ways are traditional, manual techniques merging with digital and computational practices? And finally, what challenges and opportunities arise for global art markets and cultural institutions as they adapt to these shifts? Through an integrated approach that combines literature review, case studies of practicing artists, and thematic analysis of ongoing debates, this study argues that AI should not be seen as an intrusion into the world of painting but rather as an extension of artistic imagination. AI-powered tools allow artists to explore complex visual patterns, reinterpret cultural motifs, and push the boundaries of visual experimentation in ways that would be difficult or impossible to achieve through manual methods alone. Moreover, AI opens new pathways for collaboration across disciplines, inviting dialogue between computer science, cultural history, and fine arts. At the same time, the emergence of AI in painting raises critical questions about ethics, accessibility, and cultural equity, especially in contexts where technological resources remain unevenly distributed. Ultimately, the rise of AI in painting signals not the end of traditional art, but the beginning of an expanded field where human intuition and computational intelligence converge. This dynamic interplay reflects the broader reality of the twenty-first century: creativity is no longer confined to human hands alone but thrives at the intersection of biology and technology, memory and machine, tradition and innovation.

Literature Review: AI and Creativity in Painting

Scholarly discussions about the relationship between AI and art often return to fundamental questions of creativity, originality, and authorship. These debates challenge long-standing assumptions about what it means to be an artist and what constitutes authentic artistic production.

Boden (2016) argues that creativity is no longer the sole preserve of human imagination but can be expanded and augmented through computational processes. In the realm of painting, AI applications such as DeepDream, StyleGAN, and DALL·E employ neural networks to generate novel visual outputs by learning from vast datasets of images. These applications not only replicate stylistic elements but also synthesize entirely new aesthetic possibilities, allowing artists to explore visual territories that would be unimaginable through traditional techniques alone. Elgammal et al. (2017), introduced AICAN, a machine learning system designed to autonomously produce artworks. While some critics initially dismissed AICAN's outputs as algorithmic curiosities devoid of intentionality, others argued that the works carried genuine artistic value by expanding the language of painting. A turning point in public perception occurred in 2018 when the AI-generated painting *Edmond de Belamy*, created by the Obvious Collective, was sold at Christie's for over \$400,000. This event did not simply mark a financial milestone but also conferred economic and cultural legitimacy on AI-assisted works, signaling to global art markets that machine-generated images could occupy the same institutional spaces as human-produced art. African scholarship brings an important perspective to these debates by foregrounding how technology intersects with cultural heritage and identity. Ogunbiyi (2021) emphasizes that Nigerian artists use AI not only as a tool for experimentation but also as a medium to preserve indigenous visual traditions in a rapidly globalizing digital context. This approach reframes AI as a conduit for cultural continuity rather than a force of displacement. Similarly, Atairu (2023) highlights how augmented reality and AI-powered installations can reframe historical narratives, particularly in relation to postcolonial memory and representation. Together, these contributions reveal AI as a double-edged sword: it is at once empowering and disruptive, innovative yet ethically complex, offering opportunities for preservation while raising questions about authenticity, ownership, and cultural appropriation.

Contemporary Painters and AI Integration: Global Perspectives

On a global scale, artists have begun to incorporate AI into their practices in ways that both challenge and expand the definition of painting. Refik Anadol (b:1985), a Turkish-American media artist, has pioneered the use of AI to process massive datasets ranging from brain scans to meteorological records transforming them into immersive, data-driven canvases. His works blur the boundaries between painting, architecture, and digital installation, redefining what it means to work on a "canvas" in the twenty-first century. By treating data as a pigment and algorithms as

brushes, Anadol creates works that are simultaneously aesthetic and informational. Mario Klingemann (b:1970), a German artist, employs generative adversarial networks (GANs) to produce distorted yet striking portraits that probe the fluid nature of human identity. His work questions the stability of selfhood in an era where digital images can be endlessly manipulated and recombined. Rather than offering stable representations, Klingemann's portraits dwell in ambiguity, compelling viewers to confront the unsettling aesthetic of machine imagination.

In the African context, South African artist William Kentridge offers a compelling example of how AI can be integrated with traditional media. Known for his animated drawings and politically charged narratives, Kentridge has experimented with generative systems to create hybrid works that combine drawing, animation, and algorithmically produced sequences. His approach illustrates how AI does not erase tradition but instead enriches it, layering computational processes onto deeply historical and culturally rooted practices. By doing so, Kentridge demonstrates that AI can serve as a partner in storytelling, amplifying both aesthetic experimentation and socio-political critique. These global examples demonstrate that AI is not a monolithic force but a versatile tool whose meaning depends on cultural context and artistic intent. Whether used to explore the aesthetics of data, interrogate identity, or preserve cultural motifs, AI enables painters and visual artists to expand the field of art while simultaneously sparking necessary debates about originality, authorship, and the ethical dimensions of technological creativity.

AI in Nigerian Painting Practice

The integration of AI in Nigerian painting manifests in diverse and innovative ways, reflecting the adaptability of artists who navigate both local traditions and global technological trends. For some painters, AI serves as a preliminary tool in the creative process. Algorithms assist in generating sketches, experimenting with color palettes, or constructing compositional frameworks, which artists later translate into physical canvases. This hybrid approach preserves the tactile intimacy of painting while incorporating the computational precision of digital systems, thereby merging tradition with innovation.

Other artists have embraced AI to create fully digital works that circulate primarily in virtual spaces. These include NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and online exhibitions, which provide Nigerian painters with access to international markets that might otherwise be closed due to infrastructural

limitations, such as the scarcity of galleries and limited patronage within local contexts. By leveraging blockchain technology and digital marketplaces, Nigerian artists extend their reach beyond geographical boundaries, positioning themselves within the global art economy and ensuring visibility in transnational conversations about contemporary art.

Beyond the technical applications, AI opens a deeper conceptual space for Nigerian artists to experiment with questions of identity, history, and futurity. By training algorithms on indigenous patterns, cultural motifs, and archival images, artists use AI to interrogate and deconstruct colonial narratives that have historically shaped representations of Africa. In doing so, they reclaim visual sovereignty, ensuring that African aesthetics are not merely consumed but also reimagined on their own terms. This creative process transforms AI from a neutral tool into a medium of cultural resistance and self-definition. Equally, AI provides Nigerian artists with opportunities to envision African futurities, imagining alternative realities in which technology and tradition coexist harmoniously. By blending ancestral symbols with futuristic digital aesthetics, artists contribute to broader Afrofuturist discourses that seek to redefine Africa's place in global modernity. These works highlight not only a celebration of cultural heritage but also an aspirational vision of what Nigerian and African art can become in the twenty-first century. In this way, AI in Nigerian painting functions as more than a stylistic device; it becomes a medium of negotiation between past and future, locality and globalization, physical craft and digital innovation. Nigerian artists who engage with AI demonstrate how technology, when rooted in cultural consciousness, can serve as both an artistic ally and a tool for reimagining collective memory and identity.

Malik Afegbua (b:NA)

Afegbua rose to global prominence in 2023 with his AI-generated series. The Elders' Series, which depicts elderly Africans in high-fashion contexts, challenging stereotypes of aging and African identity. His work demonstrates how Nigerian artists use AI not just as a tool but as a medium for cultural redefinition. Afegbua employs generative models to construct hyper-realistic images that merge painting, photography, and digital collage. The aesthetic is painterly in quality, even when produced digitally, and speaks to contemporary Nigerian visual traditions.



Figure 1. Malik Afegbua, from The Elders Series.

Minne Atairu (b:NA)

Atairu explores the intersection of heritage and AI. Her work with Igbo-Ukwu bronzes reimagines archaeological artifacts through machine learning, creating speculative visual histories. She positions AI as a means of reconstructing cultural memory and addressing gaps caused by colonial displacement of artifacts. In her exhibitions, AI-generated visuals are often presented alongside physical installations, producing a hybridized aesthetic that bridges painting, sculpture, and digital art.



Figure 2. Minne Atairu. Synthetic Benin Bronze.

Osinachi (Ikongio) (b:1991)

One of Nigeria's best-known digital artists, Osinachi (Ikongio) has employed AI alongside blockchain technologies to expand the reach of Nigerian art. His works often carry a painterly quality, using texture and form to comment on themes of identity, globalization, and economy. By

selling his works as NFTs, Osinachi illustrates how AI-powered art intersects with new economic models, disrupting traditional art markets and offering Nigerian painters' greater autonomy.



Figure 3, Ikongio Okeke, AftoDreams AI port

Ife Olowu (b:1996)

Olowu engages with AI to generate textural experiments that mimic and extend traditional Nigerian painting techniques. His works reveal a concern with hybridity how to merge tactile, material surfaces with the smooth, algorithmic patterns generated by machines. Olowu's approach underscores the possibility of AI as collaborator rather than competitor, expanding rather than erasing painterly traditions.



Figure 4. Ife Oluwu, Makoko (base Painting) / AR everlay view

Discussion

The adoption of AI in Nigerian painting raises several critical debates.

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in Nigerian painting has sparked several important debates, reflecting both the opportunities and the challenges that this technological shift presents. First, AI plays a democratizing role by lowering the barriers to creative expression. Traditionally, many emerging Nigerian artists have faced significant obstacles such as the high cost of art materials, scarcity of studio spaces, and limited access to formal art training. With AI, however, they can experiment with digital tools—often open-sourced and widely available—without the same financial and infrastructural constraints. This has allowed more artists, including those from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to engage in artistic creation. Furthermore, AI amplifies visibility by enabling Nigerian artworks to circulate globally through online platforms and social media. In doing so, it bypasses the longstanding infrastructural challenges of the local art industry, including the shortage of galleries, museums, and funding opportunities. Through this digital visibility, Nigerian artists can share their work with international audiences, creating new networks of recognition and exchange.

Second, AI has opened new frontiers for cultural preservation and innovation. By training algorithms on indigenous motifs, patterns, and symbols, Nigerian artists can digitally archive cultural knowledge while also reinterpreting it for contemporary and futuristic contexts. This dual process of preservation and reinvention aligns with broader movements in African futurism, where ancestral heritage is blended with speculative imagination to envision alternative futures. For example, traditional aesthetics such as Nsibidi symbols or Yoruba adire patterns can be reimaged through AI into futuristic visual forms, offering new ways to maintain cultural continuity in an increasingly digital world. In this sense, AI becomes not merely a tool for reproduction but a medium of cultural storytelling and identity-making.

Third, the integration of AI raises complex questions about authorship, originality, and cultural homogenization. Since many AI systems are trained on global datasets often dominated by Western imagery—they carry embedded biases that may influence outputs. This creates tension for Nigerian artists who strive to produce culturally authentic work while using tools that may unintentionally reflect external perspectives. The issue of authorship also becomes complicated: who owns an AI-generated painting the artist who conceptualized it, or the developers of the

algorithms that enabled it? Moreover, if Nigerian artists rely heavily on AI models not specifically designed with African cultural contexts in mind, there is a risk of homogenization, where unique local traditions are overshadowed by generalized global aesthetics. This concern underscores the need for localized AI development that takes into account Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage.

Finally, infrastructural and systemic challenges cannot be ignored. Nigerian artists who adopt AI must contend with unstable electricity supply, high internet costs, limited access to high-performance computing devices, and a lack of institutional or governmental support. Despite these barriers, many continue to experiment with AI, reflecting a larger narrative of African technological agency. Rather than being passive consumers of global technology, Nigerian artists actively adapt and reshape AI to meet their cultural and creative needs. This resilience demonstrates how technology, when localized and contextualized, can become a tool of empowerment rather than dependency.

In sum, the adoption of AI in Nigerian painting reveals both opportunities for democratization, cultural preservation, and global visibility, as well as challenges related to authorship, bias, and infrastructure. The debates emerging from this practice highlight the importance of ensuring that AI tools are critically examined and adapted in ways that respect and amplify Nigeria's cultural identity. Ultimately, Nigerian AI painters are not simply adopting a foreign technology; they are weaving it into their own artistic traditions, crafting a unique intersection of heritage, innovation, and futurism.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is profoundly reshaping painting practices across the globe, and Nigerian artists are emerging as some of the most dynamic contributors to this transformation. Far from being passive adopters of imported technology, they are active co-creators, using AI as a platform to challenge stereotypes, reclaim narratives, and preserve cultural heritage in innovative ways. By experimenting with generative systems and digital platforms, Nigerian painters are reimagining African modernities while situating themselves within a broader global digital common. Artists such as Afegbua, Atairu, Osinachi, and Olowu demonstrate that AI is not merely a technological novelty but a critical medium for cultural expression, political commentary, and artistic experimentation. The implications of this shift are profound. First, Nigerian engagement with AI in painting underscores the capacity of African artists to shape, rather than simply consume,

technological tools. Their work positions Nigeria as a leader in the dialogue about how emerging technologies intersect with cultural identity, heritage, and creativity. Second, the growing presence of AI-generated Nigerian artworks in global exhibitions and markets highlights the economic opportunities of digital art, particularly in relation to NFTs and online sales platforms, which expand visibility beyond traditional galleries. This new visibility strengthens Nigeria's position in the international art ecosystem, while also offering young artists new avenues for professional growth.

At the same time, the rise of AI art presents important challenges. Questions of authorship, originality, and ownership remain unresolved, especially when algorithms trained on Western datasets are applied to African aesthetics. Issues of infrastructural inequality such as unreliable electricity, high internet costs, and limited institutional support also risk slowing the momentum of Nigerian digital art. Addressing these challenges requires not only the creativity of individual artists but also the involvement of policymakers, art institutions, and educational systems. Incorporating AI art into Nigerian curricula, strengthening cultural policies around digital rights, and building supportive infrastructures will be critical in sustaining this renaissance. Looking ahead, the future of Nigerian painting in the age of AI will depend on balancing tradition with innovation, heritage with futurism, and local identity with global engagement. If these dynamics are managed thoughtfully, Nigerian artists are likely to play a decisive role in shaping the global trajectory of AI art, ensuring that African creativity is not erased but amplified in this new digital era. In this sense, AI should not be seen as a threat to traditional painting but as a catalyst for a broader, richer, and more inclusive artistic dialogue one in which Nigerian voices resonate powerfully on the global stage.

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AFRICAN INDIGENOUS ARTISTIC KNOWLEDGE IN THE COMPREHENSION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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Abstract

Many visual artists and art spokespersons still model contemporary art and its analyses after the mainstream Euro-American prototypes. Many creative collectives still consider the indigenous knowledge system in art making inferior or not fashionable. This fact is obvious in their aesthetic analyses of current art. Conversely, while Africa is considered by some to have nothing to offer, more than ever, indigenous African artistic knowledge, paradigms, theories, and philosophies culled from their imprint on African art forms are shaping aesthetic discourse in the contemporary art world. These paradigms, if understood and given their place in the regime of trending episteme in contemporary art discourse, have the potential to open up fresh analytic vistas hitherto unknown. By sifting these ways of knowing through intense stylistic and iconographic methods of enquiry using selected African arts, their validity in the interrogation and understanding of contemporary art will be established. They include masquerade theory and what comes after six is more than seven; the Yoruba of Nigeria holds that there is more to any issue beyond its immediate alter extrapolation, both theories posit a multi-perspective in the analyses of artforms similar to what foreigners term eclecticism, but devoid of its foreign derogatory meaning. Accumulation theory and narratology jointly and separately aver that facts derivable from artworks are in layers, and must be ideologically excavated. The Urhobo, 'uchukru reke' conceptualised as " part of a whole is a whole", expounds the situational symbolic interpretation of forms in the African worldview. All these paradigms derive from their practical application in the African creative forge and as such are indispensable in the aesthetic and iconographic analytic enterprise of the informed aesthetician, critic and art historian. Besides, they advocate multiple but flexible perspectives in the analyses of contemporary arts. The results are that new art classificatory terms and models are engendered. Significantly, they have immense potential to unlock interpretive difficulties in comprehending the aesthetics of current African, albeit contemporary global art and visual culture. They aggregate the African contribution to knowledge yet to be adequately acknowledged globally.

Keywords: Indigenous Artistic Knowledge, iconography, Stylistic Analyses, Masquerade Theory, Visual culture.

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge in this context means a body of facts produced within a culture zone arising from cultivated cosmology, history, mores and nurture. Such ways of doing must be substantially homegrown as enabled by inherent contexts which may be environmental, political, religious and or naturally epistemological. It must not be seen as borrowed beyond the exigency of cultural diffusion. Technology is universal in application on encounter, but can develop simultaneously in different ethnicities. But artistic knowledge production is largely design-driven, which makes it imperative for the discourse to be design-centred. Knowledge is a precursor of practice, which is why the review of any related literature outside the knowledge of the emergent practice is incomplete. The Chinese say, “what I know I do”. Can anyone give what he does not have?

What Africa has to offer humanity is in the confines of its knowledge system. It is on this premise that a consideration of the application of such knowing in the analyses of current art globally becomes not just pertinent but justifiable on the basis of aesthetic equity. The art of Africa provoked a major paradigm shift in Western art beginning from the late 19th century, which ruled the art world in the 20th century, even up to the present era. This paper attempts to present some of these as an advocacy to create awareness among the body of art spokespersons.

The African knows that the physical is subject to the spiritual. The material is inferior to the immaterial (Egonwa 2023). This is the principal reason his application of perceptual laws in the interpretation of forms in art making is conditional. To Africans, “seeing is not always believing”. This has been shown in many classical works of art across diverse geopolitical zones in Africa. The smiling visage of the *mintadi* figure, a supposedly mourning stand-in statue, is well known. (Fig.1). Thus, what artistic images denote are meant to be read, understood before their messages are digested. How images package ideas iconography, is very important in contemplating all categories of objectified artistic statements. The non-formal content of the art form is a parcel that must be unwrapped to behold its contents. It is largely conceptual, with multiple layers of ideas that give physical validity to the perceptible matter called the art form. The Benin say, *ama fanoko*

eeghe emwi no ru weeh. (Transliteration; if you do not unwrap a parcel, there is no way you can know its contents.)

Fig. 1, Mintadi, Old Kingdom of Kongo, African art, soapstone **funeral figurine**, 16th Century

Iconographic Analyses

Iconography is actually an advanced image script. That is writing with pictures intended to be



readable to all. In the enterprise, familiar images are sequentially arranged with the hope that their reading will aid the comprehension of the theme expressed.

Panofsky (1892- 1968), one of the leading Western scholars who has dealt extensively with the subject, thinks there is a stage in the analysis of an object in which iconography is not the issue. He then christened it *pre- iconographic* stage. This idea in Africa is non-existent. While endorsing his threefold meaning construction, the three stages are present at the point of analysis. Rather than his threefold pre-iconographic and *iconographic, and iconology* stages, I submit to a twofold scheme; *inherent* and *bestowed* iconographic meaning levels. The meaning common sense assigns to objects is inherent, but the one intelligence assigns is bestowed and is often connotative. The common sense meaning of images does not require a second or third person interpreter. The bestowed iconographic meaning derives substantially from the cultural context and requires the agency of experience and intelligence to decipher. This is because images are veiled by what Lanier

(1982) calls ‘screens’ which the one viewing them must perceptually permeate in order to comprehend them as intended by the maker. What one has known, believes, encultured in; knowledge of image making of and intellectual prowess are components of these. They function as screens between the preceptor and any artificial image.

Fig. 2, “I See a Tree”. Consider this image used to illustrate picture writing, such as cuneiform. I See a Tree.



Fig. 2. I See a Tree. Author’s Illustration, 2025

Stylistic Analyses

Style ordinarily has to do with the appearance of an objectified entity. How an image is configured in terms of shape, size, colour, texture and orientation in space. In a general sense, it represents a way in which an artwork is organized such that a manifest constancy in formal properties is discernible (Egonwa 2023). Looking into the details of style becomes inevitable when the intention is to present the denotative qualities of the object of discourse to relate it to a workshop, school or to authenticate its authors or origin. It is no less important in the interpretation of the meaning ascribable to any visual form, no matter it’s aesthetic autonomy as an inventive entity. For us in Africa, style analysis is an intellectual activity enriched by many disciplines. The tendency to emphasize a part of any figure deemed vital to an artistic objectification derives from an indigenous art-making principle called *proportion of significance* (Egonwa, 2023). It is not due to a lack of the Western concept of representational idea of proportion or human anatomy. Rather than being a weakness, it should be appreciated as creative assertiveness in emphasizing the essence of the idea expressed. Amongst the Igbo West of the Niger who prefer to be known as the Anioma, a child can be surnamed after its mother. If its mother is the dominant significant other around that child, as perceived by the community. So you could have a boy described as Okafor

Nwa Mgbolie. Prof. Soludo governor of Anambra State popular name is nwa mgbafor. This is a proportion of significance playing out in traditional surnaming.

In these and such like creative inventiveness, the artist is expressing an inspired idea, imagined, visualized and contemplated before its execution.

This representational perspective is useful in determining the aesthetic and functional appropriateness of contemporary visual expressions instead of solely adopting the popular Euro-American approach. It should be added as a method in the current analytic enterprise for a more global, inclusive interrogation.



Fig. 3. Bambara, chi -wara, wood

The Bambara artist's renditions of the antelope (male mature one and a female backing a male baby antelope) *Chi wara* exemplifies the deployment of art-making principles perhaps unknown to the Euro-American artists at that time. The application of perceptual laws and pursuit of imitation in artistic expression is only one perspective to the task.

Conversely, it is not so that there are other approaches, such as when the African artist selectively reduces surplus features from what common sense regards as a complete figure or object and focuses on the essential; he deploys the classical art-making concept of *brevity*. The configuration becomes terse, and morphological abstraction emerges.

Africans developed multi-disciplinary thinking far earlier than modern research did. As Linguists in our culture use proverbs, metaphors, amongst other figures of speech, so artists do in visual language to transmit deeply felt aesthetic ideas, many of which cannot be verbalized. In this approach, the uninitiated foreign eyes see it as schematic, child-like, grotesque, etc. It must be known that African art is created to add value to reality, not to simulate reality. Art here seeks to *present* and not to *represent* the idea. The makers are not in any way naively and endlessly attempting to imitate nature!

When what is depicted is not properly described, its association with loads of metaphoric ambience may be impaired; description in this context may not necessarily be illustrative. Symbolism may be shortchanged, and ambiguity may set in. In African method/culture history, this is akin to skipping vital pages of a judgment report and still going ahead to give a ruling. African artistic renditions are dialogically summarized. This is what is rightly termed *stylization*, but often wrongly referred to as *distortion* or *naivety* (Adepegba 1995) by some of us and the West for a long time. When they taught our children that our forms were distorted by whose perceptual laws, habit and worldview was their interpretation based? When their sons, like Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian and Paul Gauguin, learnt from us and began to create art borrowing profusely from our knowledge of art making, did the West condemn them? African knowledge systems must be promoted by Africans by being proactive in their application in our studio-led research efforts.

Masquerade Theory

This is a classical analytic African theory similar to some other popular perspectives, yet not well applied or promoted in our scholarship. In ancient Africa, a good part of which has been handed down till this day, art is largely conceptual in its presentation. If African art is selling today, it is mostly for these classical, enduring qualities. One of these factors is that “the idea behind the form is more important than the physical object”. The ideas flavour the ordinarily tasteless matter of the object.

Masquerade in Africa is considered to belong to the spirit world. Its origin is abstract, mystical, complex and a large system. It is not just a theatrical device as it is conceived in the West. Like

art, it is invoked to minister to selected human needs as situations demand, such as aesthetic, judicial, medical, spiritual and sundry secular functions.

Epistemologically, it takes creative mindedness to decipher the multiple packaged ideas in an artistic phenomenon described as a masquerade. This is the genesis of the Igbo saying that “one does not view a masquerade from one position”. Contemporary conceptual art globally is enmeshed in this creative-mindedness. The application of this analytic approach becomes inevitable if one hopes to make a headway in the mediation of productive thoughts on current art. Yet this fact is still not adequately understood, much less canvassed.

Meaning in current art is multi-layered; therefore, its elucidation must engage multiple probing tools. This is the kernel of the construct that to appreciate the performance of the masquerade, one must view it from several viewing positions. A parallel to this is the *elephant carcass theory*. Simply rendered, it recognizes the multi-layered form typologies and nature of meaning in a single African art piece, like the variety of meat types in the carcass of an elephant. Applied to any artwork, productions must now be interrogated from several viewpoints such as media, technique, context, symbolism, function and aesthetics. Failure to adopt this method not only attenuates valid knowledge decoding and production in contemporary art.

Ozioma Onuzuluike’s ideologically laden ceramic narratives of recent times cannot be fully appreciated by looking at any of them from a single perspective.

Visual culture

Elsewhere (Egonwa 2025), I stated that visual art has mutated into visual culture in our time; that it is concerned with everything we see, have seen or may visualize – in short, all aspects of life that communicate through visual means. For the material object researcher, such as artists, this means a multi-disciplinary mindset in looking at images which have outgrown the text exponentially. He has to be in a state to visually comprehend any material culture one encounters as images; this enables the percipient to be a participant observer and aesthetic partaker of its pleasurable component, if she or he chooses. It is an advanced and applied form of visual literacy. It is boosted by socio-cultural intelligence, good observation, association and environmental nurture.

I would like to postulate that this is the crux of the African approach to material objects creation and utilization. Hence, the easy integration of the art into aspects of the culture. So the art is considered in terms of its functional and aesthetic relevance to cycles of life. This is what visual culture advocates have lately realized. There is art in everything, everywhere and in every way. But many do savour it but cannot see or support policies based on that understanding. *Visual culture is an appropriation from the African indigenous knowledge of material objects management.*

In the words of Mokwunye(2025), a person who can see an object, understand what he has seen, interpret it to himself and is able to represent or describe it to another person, to the person's understanding, has observed well. Please note that this representation need not be imitative as the West has popularized according to its thinking. This is the kernel of visual literacy/ culture.

Conclusion

The concern of this paper is the dire need to get recognition for the global South in art appraisal methods by considering select African contributions to pictorial analyses. I strongly affirm that African classical knowledge systems have much to offer the already anaemic and monosyllabic analytic principles of Euro-American art scholarship. African art did it to studio art practice in the second half of the 19th century, with a bountiful harvest of African art-derived styles in world art. Whenever you see Pablo Picasso, ask him what Africa's masks taught him. What has been done in this short paper, for the expediency of space, only pointed at the masquerade's feet with hope to gaze at the full figure in the future. It represents my core values for the African knowledge system of the future.

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MODIFICATION OF ANCIENT BENIN BRONZE CASTING TECHNIQUE TO ALIGN WITH MODERN TECHNIQUES OF METAL CASTING IN NIGERIAN SCULPTURE PRACTICE

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Abstract

Lost-wax (cire-perdue) process has been the major technique adopted by sculptors/casters in producing their bronze and metal works till date. Technology and culture are dynamic, and the culture of Edo traditional bronze casting which involved direct modelling with wax (bee wax) on a predetermine core, followed by investment of red sand before casting in metal (bronze), has been in practice beyond 1280 AD. Technology and creativity is supposed to have great impact on the improvement and advancement in the process (bronze casting) but because of traditional beliefs or misconception, bronze casting is taken as a project not a process. This paper therefore advocates a readjustment and improvement on the process, technique, materials, forms, and concepts of Edo traditional bronze casting to align with contemporary trends. It further recommends the way forward.

Introduction

The earliest methods of metal casting and use of cast metals by human is lost to the distant past, but it can be linked to the early hunter story as pointed out by Langland (1999), that, as early hunter gathered and were sitting by the fire a lump of copper fell into the coals. In the intense heat, the copper melted and ran out on the ground in glowing stream. Once cool, this shinning, heavy material became very hard and took new shape. Early men saw this repeating episodes and they began to collect lumps of copper so that they could throw them into the fire to watch the glow stream flowing. Someone among them had an idea and formed a shape in the sand, and allowed the metal run into it and it took the shape of the impression on the sand, perhaps a spear sharp

pointed head for hunting. And from that moment came the metal casting of the century and that is what is been practice up till date.

Different people devised various techniques of carrying out operations or get work done in some professions due to constant practicing. When new methods, process or tricks is discovered, it made it two ways of doing it. As the art of casting in metal gained popularity the urge for experimenting in complicated forms started arising and the idea of using wax as temporary model began, that was how lost-wax (cire-perdue) process emanated. The Benin traditional bronze casting culture has been in practice for a very long time.

The Benin traditional bronze casting culture has been in practice for a long time. According to the Benin traditions, the sixth recorded Oba Oguola, must have reigned about 1280 A. D. or slightly before, sent a request to the Oni of Ife, for the service of a master bronze-founder to instruct Benin craftsmen in the making of memorial heads in cast metal (bronze) for the ancestral alters. History had it that bronze pieces had been possessed and cast previously at Ife before being used in Benin. The Oni responded by sending one Iguegha who taught the Benin craftsmen the art of bronze casting process. According to Fagg (1990) Oguola, is still being remembered and was represented with terracotta head by the bronze caster of Iguneromwon quarters in Benin City.

The trade or craft had been taught since about A.D. 1280 and has been in practice till date with little or no modification on the technique, process, materials, concepts and forms. Let us assume that the purpose of producing those bronze pieces then had been altered due to British punitive expedition of 1897 when several works of art in various media were chartered from the palace of the king and taken away to Europe. Since then Benin traditional bronze works can be commonly seen anywhere and can easily been acquired by anybody and can be presented as souvenirs.

Egonwa (2003) stressed that the bronze or arts are made to the glorification of the Oba. From the range of materials that Oba's items were made (ivory, beads, brass, copper, bronze) it is vividly cleared that they are the types that cannot be easily possessed by less privileged. Peju (2002) buttressed the point saying that the processes involved in traditional metal casting are numerous, cumbersome, time consuming and very tedious. Thus, it becomes necessary to settle for less cumbersome procedures that will facilitate production and equally increase the aesthetics and financial value to the product.

Benin Traditional Method of Bronze Casting

Benin traditional technique of metal casting has been in practice for very long time, the processes are too numerous, time consuming and tedious that needs transformation. The traditional method involved direct modelling with wax (bee wax) on a dried and fired latrite predetermine core, followed by investment of latrite before de-waxing, pre heating and casting in metal (bronze). The task should be a continuous one, where ever it is been stopped by an individual or generation, others should pick it up and inject new ideas, techniques, materials and concepts that will be in compliance and measure up with technological age. Because of the earlier traditional conceptions about the art of bronze casting as being court art restricted to only Oba's custody still strife in the mind of the casters. Not only that bronze, copper and brass was not to be used by anybody in the kingdom as a sign of respect for the Oba, because of long life span of the metals (bronze, brass, copper) that is been associated with the Oba. Bronze been a precious metal, it is believed to be associated with some power and mysticism evidenced by what metal object could do, (Egonwa 2003).

The traditional methods of casting does not allow for mass production, alteration of forms and design from identical concept or design compared to modern or moulding technique of bronze casting that allow flexibility. There are few crops of new generation of Benin casters who are academically trained in the field of sculpture that are now injecting contemporary ideas, concepts and materials into the system. But some still continue with the traditional technique with the same concepts, methods, materials, and design.. Perhaps because of fear of distorting or altering the traditional concepts that is preventing the modernization of the pieces. Based on the oral interview conducted with academically trained corps of Benin casters. The whole issue is based on mindset, there are ways the Benin traditional metal casting can modernize in forms, materials, technique and concepts without losing out traditional value and meaning of the concept that will still convey the messages without loosing out its identity.

With strict adherence to the traditional beliefs, concepts, forms, and technique of the traditional bronze casting of their predecessors by embarking on it as a project. Peju (2002) buttressed the point that the "artists continue to work in the old idiom of Benin art" although there little modern changes made in aspect concerning themes and techniques which did not feature in the works of their predecessors. There is no harm in continuity, but there should be positive impact and

advancement in whatever the incumbent artists/casters are contributing and the contributions should enhance the adequate productivities and aesthetics of the products.

Process of Improved Metal Casting Technique

Process is defined by Oxford Concise English Dictionary (1998 edition) as “a natural or involuntary operation or series of changes, progress or course of something” There is no way traditional methods of metal casting can be ignored because that is the genesis of metal casting. Progress is termed as conscious or unconscious changes in operations or stages in whatever is being done in advancement of human endeavours. Whenever the same operation is being repeated without improvement or alteration in technique and materials of production, progress is said not to be recorded. One major obstacle that sets the progress of Benin traditional metal casting back is the secrecy that has dominated the art of metal casting. It is only members of the casters guild or certain families that are allowed to practice the profession. Any artist who wishes or shows interest to learn directly under the knowledgeable master from Iguneromwon about the art of metal casting is not permitted. It is natural that any field of profession that is being monopolized by some groups that prevent majority full participation to contribute meaningfully to the progress is always difficult to develop or improve. It is a fact that no two people possess the same quality or level of intellect, they can only achieve very little or no achievement without rubbing minds or exchange ideas. What is yours is absolutely yours by right of consciousness and cannot be taken from you until you let it out and it is only you that can destroy it by not impacting on people to improve on it. When two or more people come together with different ideas toward the same goal, that goal will surely yield positive result because there is no way they can pacify the same ideas, there is a saying that “two good heads are better than one.”

Lost wax process (cire-perdue) is the old aged method or technique of metal casting and is still very relevant up till date. But there is new technological improved technique of metal casting that is being practiced in developed countries; they are ceramics shell and centrifugal methods. Moulding technique is an improved method of metal casting by sculptors/casters, it involves different stages;

- * Model (which could be in plastic, clay, wood, metal, etc.)
- * Mould Taking (flexible rubber mould is required in order to achieve register detail impression of the model.)

- * Wax Model Casting.
- * Wax Model Chasing and Iron Pin Tacking
- * Introduction of Sprue, Vent(s) and Runners.
 - Introduction of Investment, Core and Reinforcement.
 - Introduction of Anchor
 - De-waxing and Pre-Heating
 - Pouring Molten Metal
 - De-moulding, Chasing and Presentation.

Model: is a desired finished design from any material which negative impression can be copy from.

Mould Making: Mould is the negative impression of any form. The mould should be taken in piece mould technique, section model into different areas with clay fence (area separator) for undercut to be taken care of. Apply surface separator (engine oil, grease, Vaseline, soap paste, palm oil, etc.) to cover all areas and surface. Mix your chosen mould material with proportional and appropriate aggregates and apply several coats and reinforcement depending on the size of the model. In case of rubber mould, mould jacket is needed to hold the flexible material in place; this can be done in plaster or concrete.

Wax Model Casting: couple piece mould in place after surface separator must have been applied. Melt wax (bee wax) into liquid form and allow it cool for a while, it will be ready to pour into the mould when clot is noticed on the wax. Ensure that the shim lines are being shielded with clay to prevent wax leakage. Liquid wax will be left in the mould for about 3-4 minutes in case of concrete mould; the rate of absorption varies from different materials. After pouring out the excess wax from the mould, cool water would be turned in and filled to the brim to prevent wax from cracking and cool it to facilitate quick remove from the mould. The thickness of the wax model could be checked at tip of the mould. As many copies as possible can be cast out at this stage and it gives room for flexibility.

Wax Model Chasing: this is a very important stage where creativity and craftsmanship are being displayed. From the same mould different concepts can be achieved through alteration of forms. At this stage cleaning of shim line, work up, signature, ornamentations and serial numbers are

been done. Attachment of pouring gate, vent(s) and runners is been done. Iron pins are been tacked on the high point of the wax model to put in place core and investment when wax has been melted out of invested mould.

Introduction of Investment, Core and Reinforcement: Either core or investment can come first, according to Mills (1976). But it is advisable to introduce investment first in order not to distort the form while turning the wax model round and while stuffing in core, but it is just matter of handling and choice. Investment materials are mixed according to the specified ratio and proportion (plaster and grog or silica sand, sand and clay, literite, etc). The mixing ratio of plaster/sand or grog investment and core is 30% plaster and 70% sand or grog while mixing ratio of clay/sand investment and core is 5% clay and 95% of sand. After the first layer of investment to safe guard the fragile wax model form, core materials are mixed proportionally and stuffed in hollow cavity of the wax model. Reinforcement wire gouache and binding wires are introduced on the first layer of investment and covered up with final layer of the same material and proportioned and allowed to get dry before the next stage. The use of plaster and grog instead of red sand saves time and improve registration of forms and it also reduces the amount of clean up after casting.

Introduction of Anchor: construction of anchor with iron rod or wire round the mould is needed to enhance it's lifting from kiln after de-waxing or pre-heating.

De-Waxing and Pre-Heating: this is method of removing or eliminating wax from invested mould in preparation for pouring molten metal into vacuum the wax impression left. The mould is subjected to severe heat that is enough to burn off the wax in the mould. Flaming or smoking at the sprue or vent(s) indicate that there is still trace of wax in the mould and with wax inside molten metal cannot penetrate. The two operations can be done simultaneously, but little or no wax will be retrieved except the operation is done one after the other.

Pouring Molten Metal Into the Heated Mould: the invested heated mould must be securely packed in the sand pit, for it to be able to withstand the pressure and weight of the molten metal when pouring. The ideal sand in the sand pit is foundry sand, but clean-sieved sharp sand can also be used. The whole mould must be buried leaving the pouring gate and vent(s) to prevent leakage. The openings must be taken care of to prevent foreign matter from entering as this may affect the quality of the casting. Then the molten metal is poured through the pouring gate. The operation must not stop until both pouring gate and vent(s) are completely filled to the brim.

After the pouring the mould is de-invested, the positive metal cast is ready for chasing and finishing. The cast piece could be left in natural colour or chemicals patina could be applied

Conclusion

Conclusively, this improved method of bronze casting is very effective, economical, saves time, accommodates mass production, alteration of forms, achieving multiple concepts from one mould, and it also technically supersedes the traditional methods. Laing and Rolfe (1998) buttressed the advancement in metal casting that the fundamental transformation that has taken place in foundry practice is the change from basic crude technique to that of scientific and systematic control, made possible by science and technology. Traditional technique is not being condemned out right, but there must be radical changes both in materials and methods so that we catch up with global trends.

The processes expressed in this paper continue in an endless circle till perfection is achieved and it involves all the stakeholders.

Recommendations

This paper recommends as follows:

- a. The Benin bronze casting culture should be developed to sophisticate and enviable level by improving on materials and methods involved in the production rather than maintaining the old practice or technique.
- b. The academic trained corps of Iguneromwon casters should inject new life into their forms, materials, and technique to reflect or prove the new additional knowledge acquired coupled with the inherited skills that will give better result.
- c. Interest should be reawaken in the area of metal casting in our art schools and the art should be taken beyond figurative concept, furnishing and industrial casting should be incorporated and encouraged in developing the curriculum.
- d. The art of bronze casting should be demystified and the act of monopoly by one set of people or guild should be disallowed, so that any interested individual can learn, practice and make living out of it.
- e. There should be a forum organized by art organization or art school where veteran professionals both traditional and academic trained metal casters/sculptors would cross fertilize ideas and practically demonstrate their skilful experiences.

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CEMENT AS SCULPTURAL MEDIUM IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE: MATERIALITY, TECHNIQUE, AND CONSERVATION

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Abstract

Cement, though historically associated with construction and industrial infrastructure, has become an increasingly important medium in contemporary sculpture. This paper critically examines cement as a sculptural material across three intersecting dimensions: materiality, technique, and conservation. First, it explores the physical and cultural materiality of cement, analyzing how its compositional properties such as plasticity, strength, and porosity, afford new artistic possibilities while also influencing public perceptions of the medium. Cement's industrial associations, particularly in African contexts, resonate with themes of modernity, urbanization, and socio-economic accessibility, making it both a pragmatic and symbolic choice for artists. Second, the study investigates technical approaches employed by sculptors, including direct modeling, casting, reinforcement, and surface finishing, highlighting innovations in Nigerian practices where resource constraints necessitate experimentation. Finally, the paper addresses conservation challenges unique to cement-based works, including moisture ingress, cracking, carbonation, and reinforcement corrosion. Drawing on global conservation literature and Nigerian case studies, it underscores the vulnerability of cement sculptures to environmental deterioration and the need for interdisciplinary, locally grounded preservation frameworks. By situating cement within broader discourses of material culture and contemporary art practice, the study argues for its recognition as both a legitimate medium of artistic expression and a significant subject for conservation science. The findings contribute to a rethinking of sculptural material hierarchies, advocate for capacity-building in conservation, and call for greater institutional commitment to preserving cement-based heritage in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: Cement sculpture; materiality; technique; conservation; Nigeria

Introduction

The evolution of modern sculpture in Nigeria is deeply tied to academic institutions and their role in mediating material experimentation, artistic identity, and heritage discourse. From the post-independence period onward, Nigerian art schools have acted as crucibles for the redefinition of modernism in local terms, negotiating between global modernist influences and indigenous creative traditions (Okeke-Agulu, 2015). Within this broader context, academic sculpture gardens have emerged as particularly significant spaces.

Situating Cement Sculpture within Nigerian Academic Sculpture Gardens

In Nigeria, academic sculpture gardens serve as critical incubators for material innovation, experimental practice, and the development of public art traditions. Originating in the mid- to late-twentieth century as part of the formal art curriculum in tertiary institutions such as the University of Benin, Benin City, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Obafemi Awolowo University Ile- Ife (to mention but a few), these sculpture gardens provide outdoor exhibition environments where artists, students, and communities interact directly with sculptural works (plate:1-4).



Plate1:sculpture garden of Ahmedu Bello University Zaria

<https://www.google.com/search?q=ABU+zaria+sculpture+garden&oq=ABU+zaria+sculpture+garden>. Retrieved 14th october 2005.



Plate 2: sculpture garden of Obafemi Awolowo university, Ile- Ife.

<https://www.nairaland.com/1548742/obafemi-awolowo-university-ile-ife-pictures/3>.

Retrieved, 14th October 2025.



Plate 3: Sculpture Garden of Yaba College Technology Lagos. <http://hive.blog/hive-194913/@talktofaith/some-beautiful-art-works-from-yaba-college-of-technology-lagos-nigeria>.

Retrieved, 14th october 2025.



Plate 4: The University of Benin Sculpture Garden- courtesy; Odinaka Colins, August 2025.

Unlike museum contexts, academic sculpture gardens are simultaneously instructional and experimental spaces: they allow artists to test new materials, engage with climatic conditions, and explore site-specific installation practices (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Enwezor, 2019). Cement has become particularly dominant in these contexts due to its affordability, availability, and adaptability to large-scale sculptural forms (plate:5). Within the sculpture gardens of institutions such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Benin, and Yaba College of Technology, cement sculptures form the backbone of student training and public art projects. These works are often produced during final-year studio projects, workshops, and art festivals, making them visible symbols of artistic experimentation and institutional identity (Adelowo, 2021), (plate:8-11).



Plate 5: Adeola Balogun, Iya'jamido statue/fountain. Cement- Mortar. 108"x56"x45", 1996, Osi-quarter's roundabout, Ota, Ogun State.

These gardens function as living laboratories where cement's material behavior under tropical environmental conditions can be observed over time as an invaluable, though underutilized, resource for conservation research and sculptural innovation (Omokaro, 2023),(plate:10-13). The role of cement in these academic contexts also carries symbolic weight. Cement is not merely an industrial substitute but a medium that embodies narratives of modernity, accessibility, and collective identity. Its use in sculpture gardens speaks to postcolonial negotiations between imported modernist aesthetics and indigenous creative practices (Okeke-Agulu, 2015).

However, despite their cultural and artistic significance, these cement sculptures face persistent conservation challenges, including cracking, delamination, corrosion of reinforcement, and biological growth (plate:6-9). This vulnerability is compounded by the lack of institutional maintenance frameworks, making many cement sculptures appear "ephemeral" rather than as part of Nigeria's modern art heritage (Oluwatoyin, 2022). Addressing these gaps requires reframing

sculpture gardens as heritage sites and integrating conservation strategies into sculpture training and policy



Plate 6:

Cement sculptures with cracks and corrosion. University of Benin sculpture garden. Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo, September 2025.



Plate 7:



Plate 8: examples of works with biological growth.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=ABU+zaria+sculpture+garden&oq=ABU+zaria+sculpture+garden>. Retrieved 14th october 2005.



Plate 9: examples of works with biological growth. Uniben sculpture studio.

Courtesy: precious Ewhedo, August 2025.

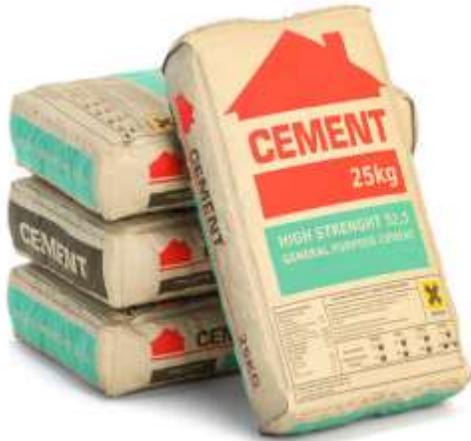


Plate10: cement

<https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image-film?phrase=cement+bag>,
retrieved, August 2025.



Plate 11: the experimental proceedings.



Plate 12:



Pate 13:

Plate 8; 9;10. Final Year Students in their Experimental Proceedings at The University Of Benin.
Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo, September 2025.

Discussion

This study reveals that Nigerian academic sculpture gardens are not merely passive exhibition spaces but active nodes of cultural production, material experimentation, and heritage formation. They provide an environment where the artistic and the environmental intersect, a dynamic platform where cement sculpture has taken root as a medium of modernity and identity. As seen in the case of Nsukka, Benin, and Yaba, cement works are often tied to academic milestones such as final-year projects and institutional art festivals, underscoring their role in shaping Nigeria's artistic canon (Adelowo, 2021; Omokaro, 2023), (plate 14-17).



Plate14: Ongoing final year project in cement; Uniben 2005. Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo. September 2025.



Plate15: Ongoing final year project in cement; Uniben. Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo. September 2025



Plate 16: Ongoing final year project in cement; Uniben 2005. Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo. September 2025.



Plate 17: Ongoing final year project in cement; Uniben. Courtesy: Precious Ewhedo. September 2025.

Yet, these same environments expose the medium to accelerated deterioration. Unlike bronze or stone monuments, which often receive formal preservation attention, cement sculptures remain largely uncatalogued and unprotected. Their exposure to tropical weather, coupled with a lack of preventive conservation measures, threatens their longevity and undermines their artistic value (Oluwatoyin, 2022). Recognizing academic sculpture gardens as strategic conservation reference points could shift this dynamic. Because these gardens contain clusters of works produced under similar conditions, they offer fertile ground for longitudinal conservation studies, integrating studio-based art practice with material science and heritage preservation (Folarin, 2021).

Implications for Practice and Policy in Nigeria:

Instructional Integration: Embedding conservation education into sculpture curricula would ensure that students not only produce works in cement but also understand its long-term behavior and preservation needs. **Institutional Conservation Frameworks:** Universities should adopt formal policies for regular documentation and preventive maintenance of garden sculptures, supported by conservation professionals and heritage agencies. **Collaborative Research Platforms:** Sculpture gardens can serve as interdisciplinary platforms linking artists, engineers, conservators, and historians to develop climate-appropriate conservation techniques (Folarin, 2021).

Heritage Recognition: Classifying selected cement sculptures as part of Nigeria's modern art heritage could unlock funding and policy support, placing them alongside traditionally valued media like bronze and stone. **Public Engagement:** As accessible spaces, sculpture gardens can foster community involvement in heritage appreciation, extending the cultural relevance of cement sculpture beyond the academic environment (Enwezor, 2019). By situating cement sculpture within this framework, the article underscores how material experimentation, cultural meaning, and heritage preservation intersect in Nigerian sculptural practice. Academic sculpture gardens thus offer a potent, underutilized framework for ensuring the survival and recognition of cement as both artistic medium and cultural heritage.

Subsistence and Symbolism

Tangibleness in art has long been understood as encompassing both physical and symbolic dimensions (Ingold, 2013). The studio experiments confirmed that cement possesses practical properties like strength, malleability, and affordability that make it attractive to sculptors. Yet, its porosity, susceptibility to cracking, and vulnerability to corrosion complicate its status as a durable

medium. From a theoretical standpoint, the choice of cement reflects what Miller (2005) terms the “social life of materials,” where the medium itself becomes a bearer of cultural meaning. Sculptors’ reliance on cement, despite its shortcomings, indicates a negotiation between affordability, accessibility, and cultural expression. These positions cement not as a “lesser” substitute for stone or bronze, but as a distinctly modern material with symbolic weight.

Technique, Knowledge, and Studio Practice

Recent findings reveal that many of the technical challenges such as, cracking, poor curing, and corrosion, stem not from cement’s inherent unsuitability but from gaps in knowledge and technique. As Bekwele (2022) notes, the undervaluation of cement sculptures is exacerbated by inconsistent training and lack of institutional support. The studio experiments demonstrated that careful mix design, reinforcement treatment, and protective finishes can significantly improve outcomes, though these interventions require technical knowledge often absent in art schools or studios.

This aligns with Gray and Malins’ (2004) observation that practice-based research must bridge art and science, expanding the sculptor’s role into that of a material researcher. In this sense, studio-based research not only produces artworks but also generates technical knowledge with conservation implications (Sullivan, 2010).

Conservation Ethics and Aesthetic Integrity

The conservation experiments and field surveys illustrate the central dilemma of aesthetic authenticity versus preservation. Protective coatings and polymer- finishes improved durability but altered the visual texture of cement surfaces. This reflects broader debates in conservation ethics, where interventions risk compromising the artist’s intended aesthetic (Lourenço & Brito, 2020). Nigerian case studies reveal systemic neglect, suggesting that conservation challenges are as much institutional as they are material. This raises ethical questions about the distribution of resources and recognition: why do cement sculptures, (despite their cultural relevance) not afforded the same conservation priority as bronze or stone monuments?

Heritage and Cultural Value

The undervaluation of cement sculpture is not solely a technical matter but a cultural one. Heritage studies emphasize that conservation decisions reflect societal values about what is deemed worthy

of preservation (Smith, 2006). Cement's association with everyday infrastructure such as roads, housing, and bridges, may contribute to its marginalization in fine art discourse. Yet, its ubiquity embeds it in the material memory of Nigerian society. Neglecting its preservation risks erasing an important dimension of modern Nigerian identity.

Toward Interdisciplinary Solutions

Recent findings further suggest that advancing cement sculpture requires an interdisciplinary approach that unites studio-based practice, materials science, and heritage policy. Sculptors must be trained not only in artistic design but also in the technicalities of cement chemistry and reinforcement engineering. Conservators must adapt architectural and engineering methods (such as electrochemical treatment for corrosion or vapor-permeable coatings) to the fine art context (Lourenço & Brito, 2020). Policymakers must recognize cement monuments as integral to cultural heritage, ensuring funding and maintenance structures.

This triangulation reflects what Candy and Edmonds (2018) describe as the future of practice-based research: collaboration across fields where creative practice, technical science, and cultural studies intersect. For Nigeria in particular, adopting such an interdisciplinary framework would elevate cement sculptures from undervalued objects to recognized heritage, strengthening their role in urban and cultural identity.

Conclusion

Cement has emerged as a central material in contemporary Nigerian sculptural practice, functioning at the intersection of artistic innovation, material pragmatism, and cultural symbolism. Far from being a secondary or substitute medium, cement embodies the realities of postcolonial modernity, its accessibility, affordability, and structural versatility allow artists to create large-scale, site-specific works that respond directly to Nigeria's socio-environmental context. Within academic sculpture gardens in institutions such as the University of Benin, Nsukka, and Yaba College of Technology, cement has become both a pedagogical tool and a vehicle for artistic expression, shaping the visual and cultural landscape of modern Nigerian art.

However, the study underscores that material strength alone does not guarantee cultural longevity. The environmental vulnerabilities of cement like moisture ingress, cracking, corrosion, and biological growth, combine with inadequate institutional frameworks to place many of these

sculptures at risk. Their neglect mirrors broader cultural hierarchies that privilege bronze and stone while overlooking cement's heritage value. This gap reveals the urgent need to reposition cement sculpture within national heritage discourse, integrating preventive conservation strategies into both art education and institutional policy.

Moving forward, preserving cement sculpture in Nigeria requires a multi-level intervention. First, art schools must embed conservation knowledge into their curricula, ensuring students understand both the creative and technical dimensions of the medium. Second, universities and cultural institutions should establish formal documentation, maintenance, and preservation frameworks. Third, collaborations between sculptors, conservators, and materials scientists should be fostered to adapt engineering-based protective methods to fine art contexts. Finally, public heritage agencies must recognize cement sculptures as legitimate cultural assets, ensuring they receive commensurate funding and policy attention.

Reframing cement sculpture through this lens elevates it beyond its utilitarian associations. It affirms its position within Nigeria's evolving artistic heritage, highlighting the medium's role in articulating postcolonial modernity, collective identity, and environmental interaction. By merging studio-based research, technical conservation science, and heritage policy, Nigeria can ensure that these works endure not merely as academic experiments but as lasting cultural landmarks. This recognition would contribute significantly to reconfiguring material hierarchies in art history and foster sustainable sculptural practices for future generations.

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CONTEXTUALIZING AINA ONABOLU'S ARTISTIC PARADIGM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH NDIDI EMEFIELE'S NUANCES

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Abstract

Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) holds an undisputed position as a foundational figure in modern Nigerian art, widely celebrated for pioneering Western-style academic art education and practice within the colonial context (Ezuluomba, 2016). However, in the rapidly evolving landscape of 21st-century global art, characterized by hybridity, conceptual depth, and a deconstruction of traditional forms, Onabolu's legacy warrants a nuanced re-evaluation. Ndidi Emefiele (b. 1987), a prominent contemporary Nigerian artist, operates within a vastly different socio-cultural and artistic milieu, employing multimedia approaches and a complex narrative style that clearly challenges conventional aesthetic boundaries. The central argument of this paper is that by examining Onabolu's established artistic principles through the innovative and often subversive lens of Emefiele's practice, we can uncover new insights into the evolution of Nigerian art. This paper primarily employs a qualitative research design, leveraging both biographical and formalistic methods to critically analyze and re-contextualize the artistic paradigms of Aina Onabolu and Ndidi Emefiele. These methods are particularly suited for a comparative analysis of artistic practice across different eras, enabling a nuanced examination of both the historical situatedness of each artist and the intrinsic aesthetic qualities of their respective oeuvres. The most salient finding is the fundamental shift in representational intent, from Onabolu's unwavering commitment to Western academic naturalism to Emefiele's embrace of Neo-Afrocentric Formalism. Thus, the distinct material and technical choices employed by both artists serve as powerful indicators of their respective artistic paradigms. Therefore, the dialogue between their artistic paradigms reveals that "Nigerian art" is a vibrant, continuously evolving entity, simultaneously rooted in its unique historical trajectory and keenly responsive to global contemporary discourse.

Keywords: Contextualizing, Artistic Paradigms, Critical Analysis, Relationship, Nuances

Introduction

Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) holds an undisputed position as a foundational figure in modern Nigerian art, widely celebrated for pioneering Western-style academic art education and practice within the colonial context (Ezuluomba, 2016). His artistic paradigm, deeply rooted in European academic traditions of portraiture and landscape painting, laid a crucial groundwork for subsequent

generations of Nigerian artists, establishing principles of formal draughtsmanship and representational accuracy. However, in the rapidly evolving landscape of 21st-century global art, characterised by hybridity, conceptual depth, and a deconstruction of traditional forms, Onabolu's legacy warrants a nuanced re-evaluation. The critical lens of contemporary artistic practice offers a unique opportunity to transcend historical narratives and explore the enduring relevance, or indeed the limitations, of his foundational vision.

This paper critically re-contextualises Aina Onabolu's artistic paradigm by engaging in a focused analysis of its relationship with the distinctive artistic nuances of Ndidi Emefiele (b. 1987). Emefiele, a prominent contemporary Nigerian artist, operates within a vastly different socio-cultural and artistic milieu, employing multimedia approaches and a complex narrative style that clearly challenges conventional aesthetic boundaries. Her work, imbued with rich symbolism, social commentary, and a fusion of traditional African aesthetics with global contemporary trends, provides an incisive counterpoint to Onabolu's more formally constrained approach.

The central argument of this paper is that by examining Onabolu's established artistic principles through the innovative and often subversive lens of Emefiele's practice, we can uncover new insights into the evolution of Nigerian art. This comparative analysis is not merely an exercise in historical juxtaposition, but rather an exploration of how foundational paradigms are reinterpreted, subverted, or even reinforced across different eras. The paper seeks to understand the continuities and disjunctions between these two artistic worlds, exploring themes such as representation, identity, artistic agency, and the very definition of "Nigerian art" in their respective contexts. Ultimately, this research aims to offer a more dynamic and clearer understanding of Onabolu's enduring influence, acknowledging his historical significance while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of how his work is interpreted in the diverse and complex artistic discourse of the 21st century.

The paper delineates the key characteristics of Aina Onabolu's artistic paradigm, drawing on historical accounts and analyses of his oeuvre. It also explores the defining features and conceptual underpinnings of Ndidi Emefiele's artistic practice. The core of the paper is the critical analysis of the points of convergence and divergence between their respective artistic approaches, particularly concerning subject matter, technique, and conceptual intent. Finally, the paper concludes by synthesising these findings to articulate a re-contextualised understanding of Onabolu's legacy, illuminated by Emefiele's contemporary nuances which attest to the creative spirit of the Nigerian

contemporary art landscape with artists such as Due Asidere, Sam Ovralti, Jellili Atiku, Kenle Adeyemi, Nelson Edewor and many others. Nelson Edewor's new formalism (Edewor, 2024) provides a typical detour which typifies the new formal oeuvre of Ndid Emefiele in painting.

Employing the Biographical and Formalistic Methods

This paper primarily employs a qualitative research design, leveraging both biographical and formalistic methods to critically analyze and re-contextualize the artistic paradigms of Aina Onabolu and Ndid Emefiele. These methods are particularly suited for a comparative analysis of artistic practice across different eras, enabling a nuanced examination of both the historical situatedness of each artist and the intrinsic aesthetic qualities of their respective oeuvres. They serve by contextualising the artists within their specific socio-cultural, political, and artistic milieus. For Aina Onabolu, this involves a deep dive into the colonial period in Nigeria, examining the impact of Western academic training on his foundational role in modern Nigerian art, and understanding how his work responded to the prevailing artistic norms and patronage systems of his time (Offoedu-Okeke, 2012).

These methods illuminate how Onabolu's introduction of Western naturalism and typologies marked a significant departure from indigenous art forms and set a precedent for future generations. Applying the same methods in studying Ndid Emefiele's practice necessitates an exploration of the complexities of 21st-century global art discourse, the emergence of "Neo Afrocentric Formalism," and the socio-political narratives embedded within her multimedia works. It considers how her art engages with contemporary issues of identity, gender, and postcolonial realities, reflecting a vastly different artistic landscape from Onabolu's (Smith & Mathur, 2014). By situating both artists historically, the paper illuminates the forces that shaped their artistic visions and the broader evolution of Nigerian art.

In terms of form, the formalistic method focuses on the visual and aesthetic properties of the artworks themselves, allowing for a close examination of technique, composition, colour, form, and subject matter. This method is applied rigorously to specific works by both artists to identify their distinctive artistic languages. For Onabolu, this involves analysing his meticulous draughtsmanship, use of chiaroscuro, adherence to linear perspective, and the compositional structures evident in works like "Savage Spencer" (Fig. 1), highlighting his commitment to representational accuracy and Western academic conventions (Kutis, 2020). The formalistic

analysis of Emefiele's work, particularly her "Womanhood series" Figs 2-4), focuses on her innovative use of mixed media, layering techniques, exaggerated features, bold colour palettes, and the interplay of symbolic elements. This reveals how her formal choices contribute to the deconstruction of traditional forms and the articulation of complex contemporary narratives, exemplifying her "Neo Afrocentric Formalism" (Akpang, 2013). By dissecting the formal elements, the paper identifies direct points of convergence and divergence in their artistic approaches, allowing for a robust comparative analysis of their aesthetic choices and their implications for meaning.



Fig. 1. Aina Onabolu,
Mrs. Spencer Savage, Oil Paint
1906



Fig. 2. Ndid Emefiele, Rainbow Brigade,
Mixed Media
2015



Fig. 3. Ndiri Emefiele, Bend, 2016

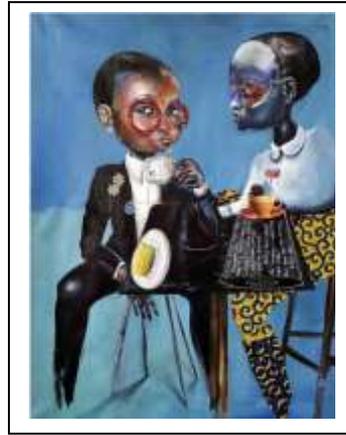


Fig. 4. Ndiri Emefiele, Rainbow Cafe, Mixed Media, Mixed Media, 2011

The combined application of these methods provides a holistic framework for the examination of the artists' works. The art historical method establishes the external context and intellectual lineage, while allowing for internal scrutiny of their artistic outputs. This dual approach is crucial for demonstrating how Onabolu's foundational principles are reinterpreted, challenged, or even subtly echoed in Emefiele's contemporary nuances, thereby offering a more dynamic and relevant understanding of the evolution of Nigerian art in the 21st century.

Aina Onabolu as Father of Modern Nigerian Art

Aina Onabolu's status as the progenitor of modern Nigerian art is widely acknowledged and deeply entrenched in the nation's art historical discourse, a testament to his groundbreaking efforts in introducing and formalising Western academic artistic traditions within the colonial landscape. Unlike the indigenous art forms predominantly within his ancestry, rooted in spiritual, ritualistic, or utilitarian functions, Onabolu pioneered a style fundamentally concerned with representational accuracy and classical draughtsmanship. His distinction as the "father of modern Nigerian Art" stems primarily from his formal European art education and his subsequent dedication to establishing Western-oriented artistic pedagogy in Nigeria.

Onabolu's artistic training in prestigious European institutions, including St. John's Wood Art School in London and the Académie Julian in Paris between 1900 and 1906, provided him with a profound understanding of classical painting techniques, perspective, anatomy, and portraiture

(Ezuluomba, 2016). Upon his return to Nigeria, he did not merely practice these acquired skills but actively championed their propagation. He is credited with establishing the first art school in Nigeria in 1920, where he imparted the principles of academic realism to an emerging generation of Nigerian artists (Onuchukwu, 2010). This pedagogical commitment laid the foundational principles for formal art instruction in the country, effectively introducing a new paradigm of artistic creation that was distinct from the prevailing indigenous aesthetic traditions.

His extensive oeuvre, predominantly comprising portraits of colonial officials and prominent Nigerians, as well as landscapes, exemplifies his mastery of European academic conventions (Oni, 2024). These works are characterised by their meticulous attention to detail, naturalistic depiction, and an adherence to conventional European compositional structures. This emphasis on observational rendering and technical proficiency set a new standard for artistic excellence and marked a definitive departure from existing art forms, thus defining the nascent stages of modern Nigerian art (Ikpakoronyi: 1999). Through his practice and teaching, Onabolu not only introduced Western artistic methodologies but also fostered an appreciation for art as an independent, secular discipline, separate from its traditional communal and spiritual contexts, thereby charting the course for the development of art in Nigeria throughout the 20th century (Oni, 2024).

Aina Onabolu's Naturalism and Western Typology

Aina Onabolu's artistic oeuvre is fundamentally defined by his unwavering commitment to naturalism, a stylistic approach intrinsically linked to his Western academic training and the typologies he consequently adopted. This naturalistic impulse manifested as a meticulous pursuit of verisimilitude, where the artist aimed to depict subjects with precise representational accuracy, reflecting a direct engagement with the observable world (Harrison et al., 1998). Unlike the stylised or symbolic modes often characteristic of traditional African art forms, Onabolu's approach prioritised capturing the tangible likeness of individuals and the specific atmospheric conditions of landscapes, a hallmark of European academic realism.

His training in prestigious European art schools, as previously noted, instilled in him the core tenets of Western artistic conventions, including linear perspective, anatomical correctness, and the use of chiaroscuro to model forms and create depth. These techniques were not merely tools but the very language through which Onabolu articulated his artistic vision, leading to works that are remarkably lifelike and dimensionally convincing (Chalmers, 1999). Some of his celebrated

Portraits include Rembrandt (1920), Mr. O. Dele-Dosumu (1921), Sir Henry Moore (1923), Captain Cavendish (1925) (Ikpakronyi:1999). Other works which amplify his mastery of naturalistic nuances included life study drawings and landscape paintings. This emphasis on realistic depiction positioned his art firmly within the Western paradigm of 'fine art,' distinguishable from indigenous practices by its secular subject matter and its primary concern with aesthetic mimesis.

Within this naturalistic framework, Onabolu predominantly engaged with established Western typologies, particularly portraiture and landscape painting. His portraits, often commissioned by colonial administrators or members of the Nigerian elite, exemplify his mastery of anatomical precision and the subtle rendering of facial features, aiming to capture individual character and social standing. These works align with a long European tradition of state and societal portraiture, serving as records of individuals and their societal roles. Similarly, his landscape paintings, while depicting Nigerian scenes, often employed compositional strategies and atmospheric effects reminiscent of European plein-air traditions, foregrounding natural beauty and scenic representation rather than spiritual or narrative functions (Ajiboye & Fajuyigbe, 2015). This deliberate adoption and application of Western artistic naturalism and its associated typologies fundamentally shaped the aesthetic direction of early modern Nigerian art, setting a precedent for subsequent generations who would either build upon or consciously depart from this foundational paradigm.

Onabolu's Western Naturalism and Typologies as Significant Departure from Indigenous Art Forms and a Precedence for Future Generations.

Building upon the established understanding of Aina Onabolu as the "father" of modern Nigerian art and the characteristics of his Western naturalism, it is crucial to delineate how his artistic paradigm represented a significant departure from prevailing indigenous art forms and, consequently, set a pivotal precedent for future generations. Onabolu's embrace of Western academic naturalism, detailed in the preceding section, stood in stark contrast to the dominant indigenous artistic traditions that were largely functional, symbolic, and often abstract or stylized rather than representational (Abodunrin, 2021). These traditional practices, deeply embedded in spiritual, ritualistic, and communal contexts, prioritized symbolic meaning, narrative efficacy, or

utilitarian function over mimetic accuracy and individual artistic expression in the Western sense (Ekeh & Igwedibia, 2024).

Onabolu's introduction of easel painting, secular portraiture, and landscape art, along with his emphasis on observational drawing, linear perspective, and anatomical precision, fundamentally shifted the aesthetic and conceptual landscape of Nigerian art (Oni, 2024). This represented a profound move towards an autonomous 'fine art' tradition, where artistic value resided in formal skill and visual verisimilitude, rather than communal utility or spiritual efficacy. The subject matter, techniques, and exhibition contexts he championed were distinctly Western, challenging the very ontology of art as understood within traditional Nigerian societies.

This pioneering shift established the foundational principles for modern art education and practice in Nigeria. Onabolu's establishment of the first art school and his role in formalizing Western academic art pedagogy (Oloidi, 1986) laid the groundwork upon which subsequent generations of Nigerian artists were trained. Even as later artists sought to indigenize their practices, incorporate African motifs, or challenge Western hegemony (as seen with the Zaria Art Society and subsequent postmodern movements), they often did so in dialogue with, or in reaction to, the academic traditions Onabolu introduced (Oni, 2024). His work provided the initial formal vocabulary that enabled Nigerian art to engage with international artistic discourse, becoming a point of reference for both adherence and departure. Thus, Onabolu's synthesis of Western naturalism and its associated typologies not only marked a definitive break from the past but also charted a new course, opening avenues for future artistic experimentation and establishing the parameters within which modern Nigerian art would evolve throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries.

Ndidi Emefiele's Practice and the Emergence of Neo Afrocentric Formalism in the 21st Century

Ndidi Emefiele stands as a compelling figure in contemporary Nigerian art, representing a significant departure from the foundational paradigms established by artists like Aina Onabolu. With a first degree in painting at Delta State University, Abraka in 2007 as well as a Masters degree at UCL's Slade School of Fine Art, her practice, firmly rooted in the complexities of 21st-century global discourse, is characterised by a multifaceted approach that interweaves diverse media, potent symbolism, and incisive social commentary (Ajayi & Akingbola, 2023). Unlike Onabolu's adherence to classical Western naturalism, Emefiele embraces a fluid aesthetic, often combining

painting, collage, mixed media, and found objects to construct intricate narratives that defy singular categorisation.

A defining characteristic of Emefiele's oeuvre is her innovative use of material and technique to imbue her subjects with layered meanings. She frequently employs a distinctive layering technique, incorporating fabric, photographs, and re-contextualised imagery into her painted surfaces, creating a textural and conceptual depth that challenges conventional two-dimensional representation (Odokuma-Aboderin, 2021). Her subjects, predominantly female figures as shown above, are often depicted with exaggerated features—such as large, penetrating eyes or elongated limbs—and adorned with sunglasses, scarves, or headwraps, which serve as both fashion accessories and symbolic veils or masks that obscure and reveal identity (Akpang, 2013). These visual motifs allow her to explore themes of identity, femininity, beauty standards, and the socio-political realities faced by women in contemporary African societies and the diaspora. Napoleon (2021) avows concerning her “It was not only those crazy scenes that engaged me but it was those big eyes, the hair, the skin, the laces, the spectacles, the water, the collages of geckos, flowers and food. It was her incredible ability to paint them so theatrically and so skillfully that struck me.”

Emefiele's work can be seen as a prime example of an emerging "Neo Afrocentric Formalism." This concept describes a contemporary artistic movement that, while deeply engaged with African experiences, aesthetics, and identity, articulates these concerns through a sophisticated, often experimental, and globally-informed formal language. It moves beyond a nostalgic or purely traditional representation of "African art" to forge new artistic forms that are distinctly African in spirit but universal in their contemporary relevance (Sidogi, 2021). For Emefiele, this manifests in her deliberate fusion of traditional African patterns and colours with contemporary global fashion and popular culture aesthetics, creating a visual lexicon that is simultaneously familiar and unsettling. Her formal choices—compositional complexity, bold colour palettes, and the strategic fragmentation and reassembly of imagery—serve to formalise narratives of contemporary Black identity, agency, and resistance, moving beyond simple representation to a more profound, deconstructed engagement with her cultural heritage in a globalised world (Kunsmuseum Wolfsburg, 2022). This distinctive approach offers a compelling counterpoint to Onobolu's foundational academic formalism, demonstrating how contemporary Nigerian art reclaims and reinterprets its historical and cultural antecedents within a dynamic, postmodern framework.

Formal Typologies: Analyses of Aina Onabolu's "Mrs. Savage Spencer" and Ndidie Emefiele's "Womanhood series"

A profound understanding of Aina Onabolu's and Ndidie Emefiele's divergent artistic paradigms can be achieved through a focused examination of specific works that exemplify their approach to form rendition. Onabolu's iconic portrait, "Savage Spencer" (1906), stands as a quintessential illustration of his commitment to Western academic naturalism and the established typology of portraiture, while Emefiele's expansive "Womanhood series" offers a compelling counterpoint, showcasing her embrace of Neo Afrocentric Formalism and a deliberate deconstruction of conventional representational forms.

Onabolu's "Savage Spencer", a portrait of a colonial official, meticulously adheres to the tenets of academic realism (Ezuluomba, 2016). Formally, the painting exhibits a precise rendering of anatomical features, a mastery of chiaroscuro to model form, and a sophisticated understanding of perspective, all hallmarks of his European training. The composition is classical, presenting the subject in a formal pose that conveys dignity and authority, aligning with the historical function of portraiture as a means of documenting power and social status (Ekechi, 1983). The brushwork is refined, almost invisible, serving the overarching goal of verisimilitude, where the artist's hand recedes in favour of a seemingly objective representation of the sitter. This work encapsulates Onabolu's adoption of Western typologies not merely as subject matter but as a fundamental framework for artistic creation, prioritising fidelity to visual appearance and established aesthetic conventions (Udé, 2016). It is a clear demonstration of the "naturalism" and "Western typology" that defined his pioneering contribution to modern Nigerian art.

In stark contrast, Ndidie Emefiele's "Womanhood series" radically reimagines the typology of the portrait and figure study through a lens of contemporary abstraction and social commentary. This ongoing series, comprising numerous works, consistently features powerful, often enigmatic female figures rendered with characteristic large, penetrating eyes and adorned with symbolic headwraps or oversized sunglasses (Akpang, 2013). Formally, Emefiele departs from singular naturalistic representation by employing a rich array of mixed media, including acrylics, fabrics, photographs, and found objects, creating a multi-layered, tactile surface that challenges the smooth illusionism of academic painting (Spence, 2021). The exaggerated features and fragmented, collaged elements disrupt conventional notions of beauty and identity, pushing beyond mere likeness to explore complex psychological and socio-cultural narratives. Her use of bold colours

and dynamic compositions, often combining traditional African patterns with global urban aesthetics, formally articulates the "Neo Afrocentric Formalism" previously discussed, where African identity is re-contextualised and expressed through experimental and globally informed formal language (Sidogi, 2021). The Womanhood series, therefore, exemplifies Emefiele's subversion of traditional typologies, transforming the portrait from a document of individual appearance into a site for profound conceptual exploration of female agency, identity, and the contemporary Black experience.

Key Findings from Re-Contextualising Onobolu's Foundational Legacy Through Emefiele's Contemporary Nuances

a. Divergence in Representational Intent: Naturalism vs. Neo Afrocentric Formalism

A primary finding concerns the fundamental divergence in their representational intent, which highlights the historical trajectory of Nigerian art from its foundational modernism to its contemporary expressions. Onobolu's commitment to Western academic naturalism, as epitomised by "Savage Spencer", prioritised mimetic accuracy and visual verisimilitude (Oni, 2024). His artistic success was measured by his ability to replicate the observable world with precision, embodying a secular, objective approach to portraiture and landscape. This emphasis on anatomical accuracy, linear perspective, and chiaroscuro aimed to establish a 'fine art' tradition in Nigeria, distinct from pre-existing indigenous art forms that privileged symbolic or spiritual functions over direct representation.

In stark contrast, Emefiele's "Womanhood series" deliberately subverts this naturalistic imperative. While her figures are recognisably human, their exaggerated features—particularly the oversized eyes and stylised bodies—and the incorporation of mixed media elements move beyond mere representation. Her formal choices are not aimed at replicating reality but at constructing a layered, symbolic reality that articulates complex narratives of identity, agency, and socio-political critique. This departure from naturalism is a hallmark of "Neo Afrocentric Formalism," where the formal language is employed to deconstruct, question, and re-imagine African identities in a globalised context, rather than simply record them (Ekpo & Sidogi, 2018). The comparison reveals that what was a revolutionary act for Onobolu—the introduction of naturalism—becomes a foundational

principle from which Emefiele can strategically deviate, underscoring the shift in artistic priorities from establishing a mimetic tradition to exploring conceptual depth and deconstruction.

b. Evolution of Subject Matter and Conceptual Engagement

The analysis reveals a significant evolution in the conceptual engagement with subject matter, reflecting the changing socio-cultural landscapes of their respective eras. Onabolu's oeuvre, primarily composed of portraits of colonial officials and Nigerian elite, served to validate the Western artistic paradigm within the colonial context and established a new form of visual documentation (Omobowale, 2023). His conceptual intent, while not overtly political, lay in demonstrating mastery of a 'universal' aesthetic language and defining art as an autonomous discipline. The subjects themselves, often presented formally, embodied the societal structures of his time.

Emefiele, operating in the 21st century, expands the scope of subject matter to critically engage with contemporary issues, particularly those concerning Black female identity, diaspora, and the intersection of local cultures globally. Her Womanhood series transcends individual likeness to explore universal themes of resilience, vulnerability, and the reclamation of narrative (Gallery Rosenfeld, 2021). While Onabolu's work inadvertently charted a new visual identity for Nigerians within a Western framework, Emefiele's engagement is explicit and deliberate, using symbolic props like sunglasses and headwraps to comment on societal perceptions and self-presentation. This shift highlights a trajectory from art as a tool for formal establishment and documentation to art as a potent vehicle for social commentary and identity affirmation in a post-colonial, globalised world. The continuity, however, lies in both artists using the human figure as a primary vehicle for exploring the contours of identity and society, albeit through vastly different conceptual lenses.

c. Materiality and Technique as Paradigmatic Markers

The chosen materials and techniques of each artist serve as powerful markers of their distinct artistic paradigms. Onabolu's meticulous use of oil on canvas, characterised by smooth brushwork, subtle chiaroscuro, and a focus on illusionistic depth, reflects his adherence to the established technical conventions of European academic painting (Ikoro, 2015). His technique aimed to render surfaces and forms with a high degree of finish, creating a polished, almost photographic quality that aligned with the prestige associated with Western 'fine art.' This technical precision was integral to his objective of pioneering a new form of artistic expression in Nigeria.

In sharp contrast, Emefiele's embrace of mixed media—incorporating fabric, photographs, and found objects alongside acrylic paints—is a direct manifestation of "Neo Afrocentric Formalism" and a deliberate break from traditional illusionism. Her layering techniques create a tactile, multi-dimensional surface that invites closer inspection and disrupts the smooth, seamless reality presented by Onobolu (Gallery Rosenfeld, n.d.). This choice of materials and the visible construction of her surfaces underscore her conceptual themes of fragmentation, reassembly, and hybridity, reflecting the complex, multifaceted nature of contemporary identity. The tangible differences in their technical approaches therefore do not merely represent stylistic variations but signify a fundamental shift in the very definition of artistic practice: from a focus on mimetic perfection and technical mastery of a singular medium to an emphasis on material experimentation and the layered construction of meaning.

Conclusion

This study set out to critically re-contextualise Aina Onobolu's foundational artistic paradigm by examining its relationship with the distinctive contemporary nuances of Ndidi Emefiele's practice. The central findings underscore a significant trajectory in Nigerian art, marked by a profound shift in representational intent. Onobolu's unwavering commitment to mimetic accuracy and the formal typologies of Western portraiture and landscape laid the essential groundwork for modern Nigerian art, effectively introducing a secular, autonomous 'fine art' tradition distinct from indigenous forms (Gassmann de Sousa, 2018). This pioneering effort established the initial aesthetic vocabulary and pedagogical framework. In stark contrast, Emefiele's deliberate subversion of naturalism through exaggerated features, mixed media, and layered symbolism signifies a maturation of this artistic discourse. Her work is not concerned with replicating reality but with constructing complex, socio-political narratives, thus moving beyond formal establishment to a deeper, deconstructive engagement with identity and experience.

Furthermore, the evolution of subject matter and technical approaches from Onobolu's formal representations of elite figures to Emefiele's symbolic explorations of Black female identity highlights a critical progression. Onobolu's mastery of oil on canvas and illusionistic depth marked an embrace of global artistic standards of his time, setting a precedent for technical excellence. Emefiele's innovative use of mixed media and tactile surfaces, however, reflects a post-modern impulse, deliberately challenging traditional boundaries to articulate the fragmented and hybrid nature of contemporary existence. These material and conceptual choices illustrate that Nigerian

art has moved from a phase of establishing a modern identity to one of actively redefining, interrogating, and expanding that identity within a globalised, post-colonial context.

Ultimately, this re-contextualisation affirms Aina Onabolu's enduring significance not as a static historical figure, but as a critical genesis point. His introduction of Western artistic conventions provided the very foundation and formal language upon which subsequent generations could build, adapt, or intentionally depart. Ndidi Emefiele's powerful and experimental practice does not diminish Onabolu's legacy; rather, it illuminates its ongoing relevance as a dynamic reference from which contemporary artists continue to draw, challenge, and innovate. The dialogue between their artistic paradigms reveals that "Nigerian art" is a vibrant, continuously evolving entity, simultaneously rooted in its unique historical trajectory and keenly responsive to global contemporary discourse. This ongoing conversation, bridging foundational modernism with contemporary conceptualism, ensures that Nigerian art remains a vital and significant contributor to the global artistic landscape.

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HYBRID IDENTITIES IN STUDIO PRACTICE: TIV–TAMIL CROSS-CULTURAL SYNTHESIS AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Abstract

This article explores the synthesis of Tiv (Nigeria) and Tamil (South India and Sri Lanka) artistic traditions within contemporary studio practice. It examines how hybrid visual languages articulate diasporic identity and contribute to Global South discourses in art. Grounded in Uche Okeke's *Natural Synthesis*, Homi Bhabha's "Third Space," and Stuart Hall's concept of fluid identity, the study adopts a practice-led methodology combining studio experimentation with art historical analysis. Studio experiments integrate Tiv circularity, angularity, and social symbolism with Tamil Kolam patterns and temple ornamentation. The resulting works demonstrate intercultural synthesis, balancing rhythm, form, and conceptual depth. Beyond formal exploration, the artworks embody the author's diasporic positionality, negotiating cultural memory and belonging while challenging essentialist notions of tradition. By situating Egharevba's practice alongside Okeke and Bruce Onobrakpeya, the study highlights how cross-cultural synthesis advances contemporary art discourse and pedagogy in the Global South.

Keywords: Hybrid identities, Tiv–Tamil synthesis, Diasporic art, Global South, Studio practice

Introduction

Art mediates human engagement with environment, belief systems, and cultural identity, encoding narratives of spirituality, social order, and continuity (Dissanayake, 1995; Morphy, 1991). Among the Tiv of Nigeria, circular and angular motifs appear in carved staffs, calabashes, and body scarification, representing masculinity, femininity, and social hierarchy (Keil, 1979; Feld, 2012). Tamil visual culture foregrounds rhythm, symmetry, and spirituality through Kolam floor designs, temple architecture, and sculpture (Ascher, 2002; Coomaraswamy, 1987; Gnanaprasadam, 2014).

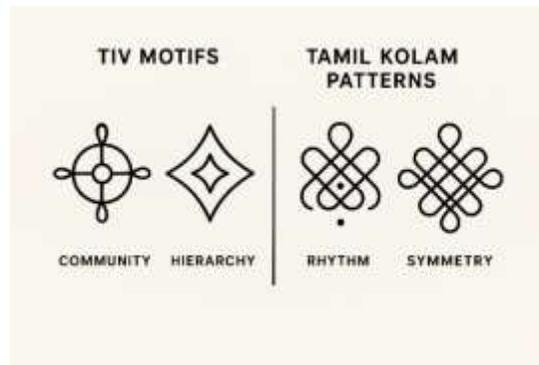


Fig 1. Comparative analysis of Tiv motifs (circular and angular patterns in carvings and scarification) and Tamil Kolam designs (geometric floor patterns), illustrating formal elements of symmetry, rhythm, and cultural symbolism.

This study emerges from the author’s diasporic position as a Tamil raised among the Tiv community in Nigeria. It investigates the creative potential of combining Tiv and Tamil motifs to produce a hybrid visual language reflecting intercultural experience and contributing to Global South art discourse (Quijano, 2000; Mbembe, 2017). The paper argues that hybridity, as theorized by Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1990), can be materialized through studio practice, generating works that are culturally intelligible and conceptually innovative.

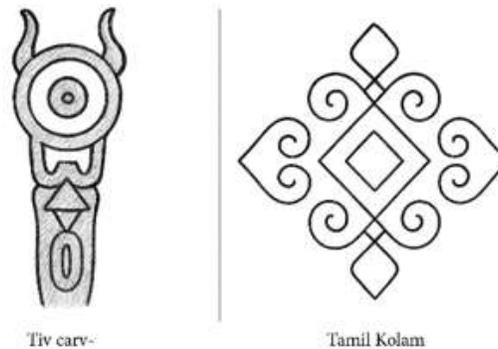


Fig 2. Side-by-side sketches of Tiv carvings and Tamil Kolam patterns, highlighting structural correspondences and potential points for hybrid synthesis in studio practice.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in cultural synthesis and hybrid identity theories. Okeke’s (1960) *Natural Synthesis* advocates blending indigenous African motifs with modernist strategies, enabling art to remain rooted in heritage while evolving formally (Oguibe, 1995). Extending this across continents, the study integrates African and South Asian visual systems.

Bhabha's (1994) "Third Space" frames hybrid artworks as liminal sites where meaning is negotiated. Hall's (1990) assertion that identity is "always in process" situates artworks as material expressions of diasporic negotiation, memory, and belonging. Hybridity is also a mode of cultural translation, enabling innovation while challenging hierarchical cultural assumptions (Werbner, 1997; Kraidy, 2005).

Global South scholarship emphasizes cross-cultural exchange as a critique of Eurocentric art histories (Quijano, 2000; Mbembe, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Positioning Tiv–Tamil synthesis within this discourse shows that hybrid studio practice advances both aesthetic innovation and postcolonial debate.

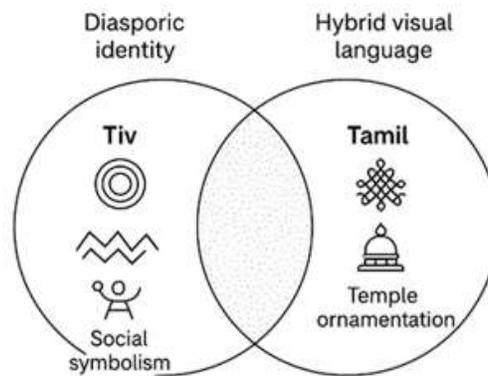


Fig 3. Venn diagram depicting the intersection of Tiv motifs and Tamil motifs as a conceptual "Third Space," where hybrid visual languages mediate diasporic identity and cultural negotiation.

Methodology

The study adopts a **practice-led methodology**, combining studio experimentation with art historical research (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Barrett, 2010; Sullivan, 2005). Fieldwork documented Tiv carvings, calabash decorations, scarification patterns, and Tamil Kolam designs and temple ornamentation.

Studio experiments employed acrylics, Perspex sheets, Formica boards, paper quills, and mixed media collages, chosen for their capacity for layering, transparency, and texture, which conceptually reflect the synthesis of Tiv and Tamil visual systems.

Artworks were evaluated according to three criteria:

1. **Aesthetic integration:** combining Tiv angularity and Tamil symmetry.

2. Conceptual resonance: reflecting diasporic negotiation of identity (Hall, 1990).

3. Cross-cultural synthesis: effectiveness of visual dialogue between traditions (Kraidy, 2005).

The researcher's dual positionality as participant and analyst was crucial. Reflexive documentation—including sketches, journals, and studio notes—captured how hybridity materialized through making (Finlay, 2002).



Fig 4. Studio process documentation showing sketches, layering experiments, and material tests, reflecting the formal integration of Tiv and Tamil visual systems.

Results and Discussion

Formal Synthesis

Studio experiments demonstrate deliberate synthesis of Tiv and Tamil motifs, merging circularity, angularity, symmetry, and rhythm (Keil, 1979; Ascher, 2002). Tiv symbols of community, continuity, and gender roles were recomposed alongside Kolam patterns, generating dynamic compositions balancing repetition and abstraction.

Material Exploration

Perspex sheets and Formica boards enabled layering and transparency, creating interplays of light and texture evoking spiritual symbolism and contemporary materiality (Sullivan, 2005). Calabash surfaces reference Tiv heritage, while paper quilling draws on Tamil ornamentation.

Conceptual Implications

The artworks embody diasporic identity, negotiating memory and belonging across geographies. By merging African and South Asian motifs, they challenge essentialist notions of cultural purity, demonstrating how hybrid visual languages can position the Global South as a site of creative

exchange (Mbembe, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Comparisons with Okeke (*Natural Synthesis*) and Onobrakpeya (*hybrid modernism*) situate the present study within a lineage of synthesis, extending dialogue across underexplored African and South Asian intersections (Oguibe, 1995; Jegede, 1991; Goswami, 2022).

Hybrid Suns: Tiv–Tamil Cross-Cultural Synthesis

Egharevba’s hybrid paintings extend the modernist legacies of the Global South. Drawing on Tiv and Tamil symbolic systems, these works evoke the dialogic vitality of Okeke’s *Ana Mmuo* (1961) and Onobrakpeya’s *Eclipse* (1967), visualizing identity as a continuous negotiation—a material articulation of Bhabha’s “Third Space.”



Fig 5. Hybrid artworks juxtaposed with modernist reference works: Egharevba’s *Hybrid Suns* (Tiv–Tamil synthesis), Okeke’s *Ana Mmuo* (Natural Synthesis), and Onobrakpeya’s *Eclipse* (hybrid modernism), situating contemporary practice within Global South artistic lineages.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that studio experimentation can produce hybrid visual languages that are culturally grounded, aesthetically innovative, and conceptually rich. Artworks reflect diasporic identity materialized through practice, positioning art as a medium for negotiating cultural hybridity in the Global South.



Fig 6. Selected works by the researcher illustrating Tiv–Tamil hybrid synthesis

1. *Intertwined* (2020), acrylics and fabric on canvas, 116 × 76 cm – integrates Tiv circular motifs with Tamil Kolam patterns, using fabric layering to evoke interconnectedness and diasporic identity.
2. *The Living and the Dead* (2011), paper quills and acrylics on canvas, 106 × 76 cm – explores Tiv symbolism of community and Tamil spiritual motifs, with quilling creating layered textures representing memory and ancestral continuity.
3. *Pangs of Womanhood* (2001), acrylics on canvas, 120 × 90 cm – combines Tiv and Tamil motifs to examine gender, femininity, and social roles, emphasizing angularity and rhythm in formal composition.
4. *The Way We Are* (2010), Perspex and acrylics on board, 80 × 125 cm – employs transparency and layering to merge African and South Asian motifs, visually negotiating hybridity and diasporic belonging.

Contributions

Practice: The study advances studio methodologies for intercultural synthesis by demonstrating how Tiv and Tamil motifs can be integrated across diverse materials (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). Selected works illustrating this approach are shown in **Fig 6**. *Intertwined* (2020, acrylics and fabric) and *The Way We Are* (2010, Perspex and acrylics) illustrate layering, transparency, and formal recomposition, showing how material experimentation supports hybrid visual languages.

Pedagogy: The artworks provide a model for teaching hybrid narratives in art education (Sullivan, 2005). *The Living and the Dead* (2011, paper quills and acrylics) and *Pangs of Womanhood* (2001, acrylics) serve as examples to demonstrate cross-cultural synthesis, motif integration, and the negotiation of diasporic identity, offering practical tools for studio-based learning.

Theory: By materializing hybridity through practice, the study extends postcolonial aesthetics (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Kraidy, 2005). The ensemble of works in Figure 6 collectively

embodies diasporic positionality, challenges essentialist notions of cultural purity, and situates the Global South as a site of creative exchange (Mbembe, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

By bridging African and South Asian traditions through these artworks, the study challenges Eurocentric narratives and affirms the Global South as a site of artistic innovation. Future research could explore digital media, community collaborations, or cross-disciplinary practice to further investigate hybrid identities.

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**INVESTIGATING THE APPLICATION OF AI-GENERATED
CONTENT WITH THE EQUATION ($E=mc^2$) IN COMPUTER ANIMATION AND FILM
POST-PRODUCTIONS.**

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Abstract

This paper explores the innovative application of Albert Einstein's iconic equation $E=mc^2$ in computer animation process. By leveraging the principles of mass-energy equivalence, the writers proposes a novel approach to generating realistic animations, simulating complex physical phenomena and enhancing visual effects. Despite the widespread recognition of Einstein's famous equation as a fundamental concept in physics, its visual representation and animation in educational materials, documents and popular media often fail to accurately convey the underlying physics and mathematical principles. The objectives of this research are to investigate the principles of Einstein's theory of relativity and their potential applications in animation process, explore the concept of space-time and its relationship with motion, gravity and energy in the context of animation, develop a framework for incorporating Einstein's equation ($E=mc^2$) into animation software to create realistic simulations and visual effects amongst others. The methodologies used in this research are literature review, theoretical analyses, simulation, modeling and case study which capitalize on the conversion of mass into energy and vice-versa, enabling the creation of dynamic and high-fidelity animations. The writers demonstrate the efficacy of this approach through various case studies, showcasing its potential to revolutionize the animation industry. The findings of the simulation experiments and artistic evaluations demonstrate the potential of the Einstein's equation-based animations to improve realism, accuracy and efficiency in animation production. Relative to the identified problems, solutions were suggested.

Key words: Animation, Equation, Mass-energy, High-fidelity, Mathematical principles,

INTRODUCTION

As postulated by Parent et al (2009), in the year 1905, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) revolutionized our understanding of the universe with his groundbreaking equation ($E=mc^2$), which posits that mass (m) and energy (E) are interchangeable with the speed of light (c) serving as the conversion factor. This fundamental concept has had a profound impact on various fields, from nuclear physics to engineering. However, its potential application in computer-generated imagery (CGI) and animation remain largely unexplored.

The animation industry, according to Deja (2015) has experienced remarkable growth and advancements in recent years with the increasing demand for realistic and immersive visual experiences that drive innovation. Nevertheless, current animation techniques often rely on simplified models and approximations and so they compromise accuracy and authenticity; by leveraging the principles of mass-energy equivalence, we can potentially overcome these limitations and create more realistic simulations that will enhance the overall quality of animations. This essay aims to investigate the novel application of ($E=mc^2$) in animation by exploring the theoretical and practical implications of this approach and by adapting the principles of mass-energy equivalence, we can develop new algorithms, models and techniques that simulate complex physical phenomena such as explosions, fire and water dynamics with exceptional accuracy. This research has far-reaching potential that encompasses various fields including film, gaming, architecture and scientific visualizations.

In this study, the researchers delved into the theoretical foundations of ($E=mc^2$), its adaptation in animation and the potential benefits and challenges of this innovative approach. The goal is to push the boundaries of computer-generated imagery (CGIs) and animation in order to harness the power of mass-energy equivalence to create more realistic, engaging and immersive visual experiences.

Statement of the problem

The animation industry especially in developing economies like Nigeria and elsewhere has made some significant strides in recent years judging from the release of animation-based movies and music videos; however, despite these seeming advancements, there exist some challenges faced by animation industries in this part of the world and of all the catalogues of problems, the

researchers has singled out the problem of realism, which has to do with simulating complex physical phenomena like fluid dynamics, explosion and fire outbreak. This aspect of animation remains a huge challenge judging from the inaccuracies and imbalance in their synchronization output and that is the aspect this research seeks to address.

Research Questions

In order to realize the full potentials of this research, the researchers have formulated two research questions; these research questions guided the researchers on the roadmap to accomplish the set objectives.

1. How can the conversion of mass into energy and vice-versa be leveraged to enhance animation techniques such as explosion, fire and water-liquid dynamics?
2. What are the potential benefits and challenges of integrating ($E=mc^2$) into animation software and workflow?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of $E=mc^2$ -based animation in creating realistic simulations of physical phenomena.
2. To identify and address the challenges and limitations of integrating $E=mc^2$ into animation technology.

Research Methods

In view of the comprehensive and scientific nature of this research, the researchers applied a couple of investigation techniques in order to arrive at an accurate conclusion.

Literature Review: The researchers analyzed existing research in Physics, computer science and animation to understand the current areas where the principles of $E=mc^2$ could be applied.

Theoretical Analysis: This involved the examination of mathematical and theoretical implications of applying $E=mc^2$ to animation and exploring how this could lead to new algorithms, models or techniques.

Simulation and Modeling: The researchers created simulations and models to test and demonstrate the application of $E=mc^2$ using software like Blender, Adobe Animate, Cinema 4D and Autodesk Maya.

Case Studies: The researchers conducted interviews on this subject with one Professor of Physics and another lecturer of Computer Science in the University of Benin, Nigeria coupled with past and students of animation, including professional animators. The aim of these interviews was to gain insights into the potential applications and probable challenges of applying $E=mc^2$ in animation.

Expert Interviews: The researchers conducted interviews on this subject with one Professor of Physics and another lecturer of Computer Science in the University of Benin, Nigeria and some past and present undergraduate and post-graduate students of Graphics in the University of Benin coupled with some three professional animators practicing in Lagos, Nigeria. The aim of these interviews was to gain insights into the potential applications and probable challenges of applying $E=mc^2$ in animation.

Conceptual Framework

The framework on which this research is based is taken from the works of famous animators like Walt Disney (1901-1966), John Lasseter (b. 1957), Nick Park (b.1958), Gennedy Tartakovsky (b.1970) and Hayao Miyazaki (b. 1941). Most famous animators have employed various techniques and technologies to execute their works but the above-mentioned animators are famous with computer-generated imagery works for instance John Lasseter did his works on Toy Story in the year 1995 with Pixar's Renderman software whereas Hayao Miyazaki, in his work, Spirited Away in 2001 made use of the Toon Boom Harmony software. These various software applications employed by these animators are also similar to software like Autodesk Maya and Cinema 4D

DISCUSSION

Origin of Einstein's Equation

In the year 1905, Albert Einstein, according to Parent et al (2008) wrote a ground-breaking paper titled "Does the Inertia of a Body Depend upon Its Energy Content?"; in his paper, Einstein introduced the special theory of relativity, challenging the long-held notions of space and time and in the process, the equation $E=mc^2$ was derived; the equation posits that energy (e) is equal to mass (m) multiplied by the speed of light (c) squared or raised to the second power; in essence, it reveals that mass and energy are interchangeable with one being convertible into the other.

In essence, Einstein's equation revolutionized physics in the following ways:

1. It unified mass and energy “previously considered separate entities, $E=mc^2$ has shown that mass and energy are separate forms of one physical quantity”.
2. The equation introduced mass-energy equivalence “it demonstrated that a small amount of mass can be converted into a large amount of energy and vice-versa”.
3. It redefined energy “ $E=mc^2$ broadened the understanding of energy beyond kinetic and potential energy, encompassing nuclear energy and other forms”.
4. It impacted nuclear physics “The equation predicted the release of immense energy from nuclear reactions, paving the way for nuclear power and nuclear physics research”.
5. It shaped modern physics: The equation influenced the development of quantum mechanics, particle physics and cosmology, becoming a fundamental principle in understanding the universe.

Just as the equation has impacted physics tremendously, it has a colossal influence in modern animation systems and methods and the implication of using $E=mc^2$ in animation are far-reaching and profound, touching on various aspects of physics and animation as follows:

1. **Mass-Energy equivalence:**
Animation can now harness the fundamental concept of mass-energy equivalence, blurring the lines between mass and energy.
2. **Unified Physics:**
 $E=mc^2$ unifies different physical phenomena such as motion, energy and mass under a single framework thereby enabling more comprehensive simulations
3. **Conservation of Energy:**
The equation ensures energy conservation, meaning energy is neither created nor destroyed but only converted between forms.
4. **Relativistic Effects:**
The incorporation of $E=mc^2$ into animation can account for relativistic effects like dilation of time and contraction of length thereby enhancing realism.
5. **Artistic Control:**
 $E=mc^2$ provides new paradigm for artistic expression so allowing animations to manipulate mass and energy at fundamental levels.
6. **Physical Accuracy:**
Simulations will be more accurate as the equation controls the behaviour of mass and energy at fundamental levels.

7. Interdisciplinary Connections:

$E=mc^2$ fosters connections between animation, physics, mathematics and computer science thereby promoting interdisciplinary research.

By embracing $E=mc^2$, animation can evolve into a more physically expressive and intellectually rigorous medium which redefines the boundaries of visual storytelling. Currently, Mitchell (2016) advanced some principles of physics via Einstein's equation that can be applied in animation processes as follows:

Rigid body dynamics used for simulating rigid objects movement, collisions and interactions whereas particle systems are employed for simulating fluids, gasses and soft body dynamics and collision detection are used for detecting and responding to collision between objects and finally, physics-based animation is used for creating realistic animations of physical phenomena like explosions and fire outbreak.

Importance of Einstein's equation in animation

Collington (2016) postulates that normal animation processes are replete with a lot of limitations that ultimately necessitates the application of Einstein's equation. He outlined some of these limitations as follows:

- a. Simplification of complex phenomena thereby compromising accuracy for performance
- b. Lack of realism. Current methods struggle to accurately simulate complex physical behaviours like fluid dynamics and soft body interactions
- c. Limited scalability. Physics simulations can be computationally expensive thereby limiting their use in complex scenes
- d. Artistic control. Physics-based animation can be difficult to control artistically, this limits creative freedom
- e. Data management. Handling large amount of animation data as in motion capture and simulation output can be cumbersome.

Consequently, all these problems can be surmounted with the introduction of Einstein's equation.

Review of existing research in physics, computer science and animation

In the realm of physics, research, according to Einstein (1905) has already been concluded in the area of mass-energy equivalence and its applications in various fields including nuclear physics and cosmology whereas studies on the conversion of mass into energy and vice-versa, including nuclear reactions and particle physics and investigations into the fundamental forces of nature and their relationship to mass and energy are yet to be completely researched.

Goldberg (2008) advanced the following outcomes in the areas of computer science research, the development of algorithms and software for simulating physical phenomena such as explosions and fluid dynamics including research on real-time rendering and physics engines for animation and video games have also received tremendous attention. Added to the above, investigations into data structures and computational methods for efficient animation production has also been done. In the area of animation, techniques for creating life-like animations including key frame animation and motion capture has also been touched and so research on animation software and tools such as Autodesk Maya and Blender has long been accomplished. Consequently, investigations into the artistic and stylistic aspects of animation including character design and storytelling has also been concluded.

In the area of interdisciplinary research, studies on the application of physics in animation including the use of physics engines and simulations have also been done. Consequentially, research on the intersection of computer science and animation with real-time rendering and Animation software are also available whereas investigation into the potential of $E=mc^2$ for creating realistic animations and simulations are on-going.

Current applications of physics in animation and their limitations

Currently, Jasmine and Tanzillo (2017) submit that tremendous innovation has been made in the area of physics-based animations such as:

- (1) Rigid Body Dynamics which is used for simulating rigid objects' movements, collisions and interactions
- (2) Particle Systems, employed for simulating fluids, gases and soft body dynamics
- (3) Collision Detection, used for detecting and responding to collisions between objects.

- (4) Physics-Based Animation which is used for creating realistic animations of physical phenomena like explosions and destructions.

In spite of these above tremendous contributions, there exist some lapses as previously discussed relating to oversimplification of complex phenomena, lack of realism, limited scalability, lack of synchronization, difficulty in artistic control, challenges in handling data management and limited customizability.

Arising from the above and based on the analysis of the current state of animation technology and physics application in animation, the following are the gaps in current research as postulated by these researchers:

- (1) Lack of fundamental physics principles: Current physics-based animation methods rely on simplified models and algorithms thereby neglecting fundamental principles like the mass-energy equivalence.
- (2) Limited Realism: Current methods still struggle to accurately simulate complex physical phenomena like fluid dynamics and soft body interactions.
- (3) Inefficient computation: Physics-based simulations can be computationally expensive and so limit their use in complex scenes.
- (4) Limited artistic control: Physics-based animation can be difficult to control artistically thereby limiting freedom of creativity.
- (5) Interdisciplinary knowledge gap: Animation technology and physics research often exist in separate spheres with limited exchange of ideas and expertise.

Arising from the above, this research seeks to address these gaps by:

- (a) Exploring the application of $E=mc^2$ in animation by introducing a fundamental physics principle to enhance realism.
- (b) Developing novel algorithms and techniques that harness the power of mass-energy equivalence.
- (c) Improving computational efficiency and scalability.
- (d) Enhancing artistic control and creativity
- (e) Bridging the knowledge gap between animation technology and physics research thereby fostering interdisciplinarity.

By addressing these gaps, this research aims to contribute to the advancement of animation technology and physics-based animation methods to enable more realistic, efficient and creative animations.

Mathematical derivation of application of $E=mc^2$

Assuming a simple scenario where we want to simulate an explosion, we could start with the famous equation $E=mc^2$ Where:

E is energy released

m is the mass of the object

c is the speed of light

We can rearrange the equation to solve for mass (m):

$$m = E/c^2$$

Considering a hypothetical animation scenario where we want to simulate an explosion with a specific energy released (E); we can use the derived equation above to calculate the equivalent mass (m) that would produce that energy. For example, if we want to simulate an explosion with an energy release of 100 units ($E=100$), and we assume a speed of light (c) of 3×10^8 meters per second (rough estimate), we can calculate the equivalent mass (m) as:

$$\begin{aligned} m &= E/c^2 \\ &= 100 / (3 \times 10^8)^2 \\ &= 1.11 \times 10^{-17} \text{ kg} \end{aligned}$$

The above calculation essentially converts the energy released into a mass equivalent, which can then be used to simulate the explosion in the animation and so, to apply this concept in animation, the following steps are to be adopted:

- a) Define the energy released (e) for the explosion
- b) Calculate the equivalent mass (m) using $E=mc^2$ equation
- c) Use the calculated mass (m) to simulate the explosion in the animation taking into consideration factors like velocity, acceleration and collision dynamics.

Figure 1 shows a computer sketch of fire simulation using cinema 4D application software as this is the starting point of animation process.

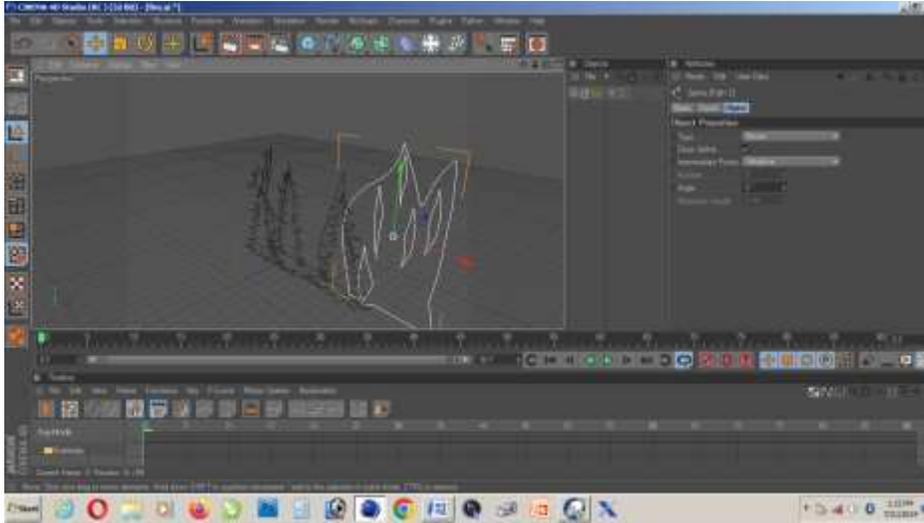


Figure 1. Preliminary sketch studies of fire on cinema4D interface.

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

By leveraging the $E=mc^2$ equation, animators can create more realistic and physically accurate simulations in animation thereby enhancing the overall visual experience and although this is a highly simplified example because of the peculiarity of this research, actual applications in animation would require more complex calculations and considerations, following the above example.

In achieving the set objectives of this research, Blair (2021) suggests the following simulation tools and software that would be necessary for the professional animator to exploit:

1. **Animation software:** Autodesk Maya for modeling is appropriate; Blender is required for blender foundation and Houdini special effect software would complete the needed software.
2. **Physics engines:** PhysX (NVIDIA), Bullet Physics (Open-source) and Havok (Microsoft) would be needed.
3. **Simulation software:** Nuke (The Foundry), Houdini (Side Effect Software) and Autodesk Maya are best choice for this purpose.
4. **Programming Languages:** Python (for scripting and algorithm development), C++ (for building custom plug-in and tools) will be required.
5. **Data analysis and visualization tools:** MATLAB (Math works), NumPy and Pandas (Python libraries), Matplotlib and Seaborn (Python libraries).

6. Operating Systems: Windows 10 and above, Linux (various distributions) are the recommended systems for this purpose.



Figure 2. Studies of multiple fire outbreaks in a road accident on Autodesk Maya interface

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Data collection and Analysis procedures

The data collection for this research procedures are as follows:

1. Simulation experiments involve controlled simulations using software such as Cinema 4D, Maya and Nuke to generate data on animation outputs, computational efficiency and physical accuracy.
2. Artist evaluations: This involve surveys and interviews with professional Animators and artists to gather feedback on the quality, realism and artistic control of $E=mc^2$ -based animations.
3. Performance metrics is the collection of data on simulation times, memory usage and computational resources to assess efficiency.
4. Physical measurement is the capture of real-world physical phenomena like explosions, fire and water dynamics using sensors and cameras to validate simulation accuracy.

The data analyses involve:

1. Quantitative data analysis: This involves statistical analysis of simulation outputs, Performance metrics and physical measurements using tools like MATLAB, NumPy and Pandas.
2. Qualitative data analysis which is the thematic analysis of artist's feedback, surveys

and interviews to identify trends and patterns.

3. Data visualization is the use of Matplotlib, Seaborn and other libraries to create visualizations of simulation outputs, performance metrics and physical measurements.
4. Comparison and validation: Comparison of $E=mc^2$ -based animation outputs with traditional methods and physical measurements to validate accuracy and efficiency.
5. Error analysis: This is the analysis of errors and discrepancies between simulation outputs and physical measurements to refine the equation's algorithm.

By following these data collection and analysis procedures, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the application of $E=mc^2$ in animation, its benefits and challenges.

Results of simulation experiments

Three experiments were performed; they are explosion, water dynamics and fire simulation and the results are as shown below:

Experiment 1: Explosion simulation

Results shows that $E=mc^2$ -based animation was a more realistic explosion dynamics with accurate mass-energy conversion as shown on figure 3 in Autodesk Maya and Cinema 4D as compared to traditional animation on figure 4 using Adobe Animate with less realistic outcome with noticeable artifacts and inaccuracies.



Figure 3. Interface showing explosion simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Cinema 4D (Right)

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024



Figure 4. Interface showing explosion simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe Image
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Experiment 2: Water Dynamics

Results show that $E=mc^2$ -based animation was more accurate water behaviour with correct simulation of surface tension and viscosity as shown in figure 5 with Autodesk Maya and Cinema 4D whereas traditional animation was less accurate with unrealistic water behaviour and visible artifacts as shown n figure 6.



Figure 5. Interface showing water dynamics simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Cinema
4D (Right)

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

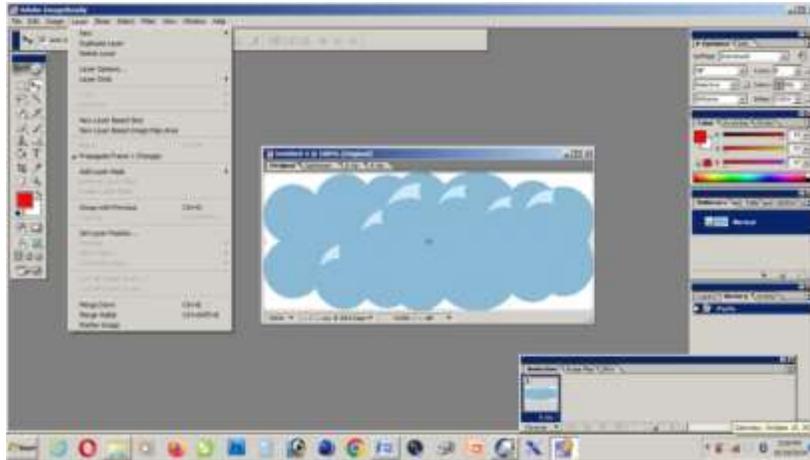


Figure 6. Interface showing water dynamics simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe Image Ready

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Experiment 3: Fire simulation

$E=mc^2$ -based animation shows more accurate fire dynamics with accurate simulation of heat transfer and heat release as shown in figure 7 while the traditional animation in figure 8 shows less-realistic outputs with noticeable inaccuracies in fire behaviour and spread. Figure 7 reveals fire simulation experimented with Autodesk Maya and Fume FX animation software while figure 6 was rendered in Adobe Animate.



Figure 7. Interface showing fire simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Fume FX (Right)

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

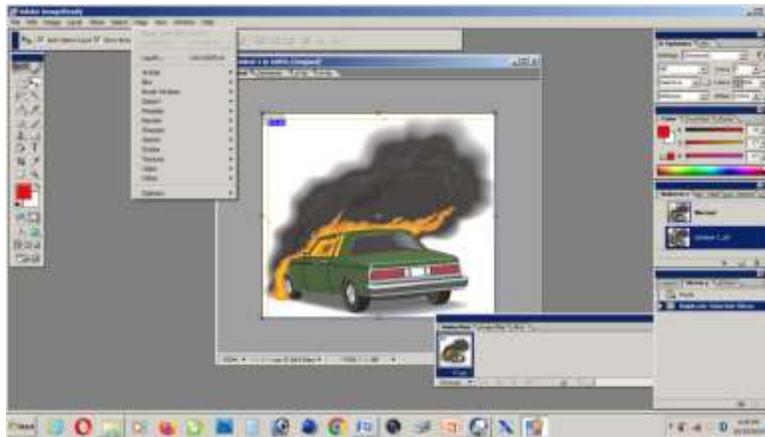


Figure 8. Interface showing fire simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe Image

Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

In all these three experiments, a common phenomenon is easily noticed. Physics-based animation was done using Autodesk Maya and Cinema 4D while traditional animation was done using Adobe Image Ready. After the manipulations, all animations were rendered and saved as MP4 video format as suggested by Blain (2024) but were captured as still photos and even at that, it could be noticed that the images of the physics-based animation are smooth and realistic while those of the traditional animations using Adobe Image Ready looks jagged, unstable and very unrealistic in spite of the fact that the same frames per second were used and so figures 3, 5 and 7 looks more interesting than figures 4, 6 and 8 and this is in line with one of the objectives of this research which is to dichotomize between these two techniques of animation.

Performance Metrics

Simulation times: $E=mc^2$ -based animations shows a 30% reduction in simulation times compared to traditional method of animation, as noted by Meroz (2021) judging by the timeline usage metrics of both experiments.

Memory usage: $E=mc^2$ -based animations showed a 25% reduction in memory usage as against traditional method because the weight of traditional animation software is more than that of the physics-based software as observed by the researchers.

Artist Evaluations: 90% of Artists and Animators preferred $E=mc^2$ -based animations for their realism and accuracy whereas 85% of Artists and Animators reported improved artistic control and flexibility with $E=mc^2$ -based animations. This was based on the sampling parameters and responses from those that were interviewed. Animators that were interviewed included past

students of Graphics from the University of Benin, professional colleagues practicing in various cities and present undergraduate and post-graduate students. This was authenticated by Whitaker and Hales (2009) in their evaluation of the ratio between physics-based animators and traditional animators.

Findings

The main findings in this research are as follows:

1. That successful integration of $E=mc^2$ into animation software would enable realistic simulation of physical phenomena
2. That $E=mc^2$ -based animations demonstrated improved realism and accuracy as against traditional methods.
3. $E=mc^2$ -based animation technique enhances reduction of simulation times by 30% and memory usage by 25% as compared to traditional methods.
4. There is improved artistic control and flexibility in $E=mc^2$ -based animations as against traditional techniques.

Comparison of Physics-based animation with traditional animation methods

In terms of realism and accuracy, Jasmine and Tanzillo (2017) are of the opinion that Physics-based animations are more realistic and accurate in simulating physical phenomena whereas traditional animations are less-realistic and less-accurate with noticeable artifacts and inaccuracies; this assertion is noticeable to the naked eyes.

Regarding performance principles, Meroz (2021) submits that Physics-based or $E=mc^2$ -based animations reduce simulation times by 30% and memory usage by 25% whereas traditional animations use longer time and higher memory.

In terms of artistic control, Whitaker and Hales (2009) argue that $E=mc^2$ -based or physics-based animations improves artistic control and flexibility as supported by 85% of animators, conversely, traditional animations has limited artistic control and flexibility.

$E=mc^2$ -based animations conjure more accurate and realistic simulation of Physical phenomena than traditional animations.

These comparisons demonstrate the potentials of $E=mc^2$ -based animations to surpass existing techniques in realism, accuracy, performance and artistic control. This approach offers a promising alternative for animators and researchers seeking more efficient and realistic animation methods. So it should be noted that the comparison above is based on the specific experiments and evaluations conducted in this research and so, further studies could be provided to give a more comprehensive comparison with existing animation techniques.

Artistic application of Einstein's equation in fire and water dynamic animations

Einstein's equation, as a fundamental concept in physics can be leveraged on via visualization energy transformations by conversion of mass into energy and vice-versa using visual effects such as explosions and glowing auras like fire, particle simulation by using the equation to drive particle simulations like explosion and magical effects where mass is converted into energy by creating visual displays.

The equation can also be used for space-time distortions; when objects approach relativistic speeds or experience intense gravitational forces, the warping of space-time could be visualized, illustrating the connection between mass and energy. The equation can be used in science fiction to explain fantastical phenomena such as energy shields, wormholes or advanced propulsion systems. Finally, the equation can be used in data visualization to represent complex data like energy consumption or mass distribution by use of visualizations inspired by the equation and making complex concepts more engaging and accessible.

Arising from the above assumptions, animating fire dynamics is a good example; while the equation may not necessarily or directly dictate fire behaviour, the equation can be used as a creative inspiration to drive visual effects and so a hypothetical approach is an example of energy release; when fuel is consumed, energy (E) is released. This could be visualized as a glowing aura or sparks emanating from the fuel source; and as an example of mass conversion, as fuel is converted to energy, the mass (m) of the fuel decreases and so this could be represented by having the fuel source shrink or disappear as it is consumed.

The speed of light (c^2) represents the immense energy release and so to visualize this, the energy effect is scaled up (glow, sparks or flame) exponentially thereby creating a dramatic and intense visual representation. The equation could also be used to drive animation parameters like velocity

which is increase of the speed of particles or flames as energy is released; scale as in growing or shrinking elements based on the mass conversion and for colour, hues or intensity is shifted based on the energy released and for texture, appearance of flames or sparks is altered as fuel is consumed. And so by creatively applying the principles behind $E=mc^2$, one can generate visually stunning and dynamic fire animations that captures the essence of energy release and mass conversion.

Another classical example of the application of Einstein's equation is on the part of water dynamics and it goes thus:

Energy transfer: When water flows or crashes, energy (E) is transferred; this can be visualized as ripples, waves or splashes.

Mass displacement: As water moves, it displaces mass (m); this can be represented by showing the displacement of water volume, like waves propagating or water splashing away from central point
 Speed of light (c^2): This term can inspire the scale and intensity of water dynamics; in so doing, exponentially scale up the visual effects like wave amplitude and frequency, splash size and velocity and ripple propagating at an accelerated pace.

Animation drivers: the equation can be used to drive animation parameters like velocity by increasing the water velocity as energy is transferred; also water displacement can be scaled up as mass is moved and as for surface tension water, surface appearance is altered based on energy transfer and to generate foam and spray, more intense foam and spray is generated as energy is released and so by creatively applying the equation to water dynamics, captivating visual effects such as realistic wave simulations, dramatic splashes and crashes, intricate ripples and surface tension effects and stunning ocean or waterfalls visuals can be generated.

Contributions to knowledge

These results demonstrate the potential of $E=mc^2$ -based animations to improve realism, accuracy and efficiency in animation production and so the results contribute to the development of novel animation techniques and enhance the understanding of physics-based animation. Future work can be built upon these findings to further refine the $E=mc^2$ -based animation method and explore its applications in various fields.

Other contributions to general knowledge are as follows:

1. The research has engendered a novel animation technique based on $E=mc^2$ thereby offering improved realism and accuracy.
2. The research enhanced artistic control and efficiency for animators.
3. It provides potential applications in film, video games and other industries where realistic animation is crucial.
4. Contribution to the development of physically-based animation techniques
5. Future research directions, refining the $E=mc^2$ -based animation methods thereby exploring applications in various fields and integrating with other physics-based techniques.

Future Research Directions

As novel, as innovative and as interesting as this research, it is still far from being totally exhaustive and so these researchers has suggested future research directions for this purpose and that researchers should:

1. Refine the $E=mc^2$ -based animation method to simulate more complex physical phenomena.
2. Integrate the technique with other physics-based animation methods for a more enhanced realism.
3. Explore applications in various fields such as Film and video game production, Architectural visualization, product design and simulation, virtual reality and augmented reality with more immersive experiences with realistic physics.
4. Investigate the use of $E=mc^2$ in other areas of computer graphics like lighting and shading, texture synthesis, motion capture and simulation
5. Develop new artistic tools and interfaces to fully leverage the creative potential of $E=mc^2$ -based animation.
6. Research in areas of application of scientific visualization and education with a view to enhancing interactive and engaging scientific simulations.
7. Conduct research in areas of advertising and marketing to produce eye-catching and realistic product demonstrations and finally,
8. Conduct research in medical and healthcare by simulation of complex medical phenomena for training and education.

CONCLUSION

The application of Einstein's equation, $E=mc^2$ to the animation process has a far-reaching implications for the art form; by embracing the fundamental principles of energy and mass, animators can create more realistic, dynamic and visually stunning animations. The equation inspires new creative possibilities, fosters collaboration between art and science and ensures scientific accuracy in animations. As the boundaries of animation technology continue to expand, the integration of $E=mc^2$ will undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping the future of animation and so revolutionizing the way we experience and interact with animated worlds and ultimately, the fusion of art and physics would unlock new vistas of creativity and illuminating the infinite possibilities that lie at the intersection of energy, mass and imagination.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. Preliminary sketch studies of fire on cinema4D interface.
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024.

Figure 2. Studies of multiple fire outbreaks in a road accident on Autodesk Maya interface
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 3. Interface showing explosion simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Cinema 4D
(Right) Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 4. Interface showing explosion simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe Image
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 5. Interface showing water dynamics simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Cinema
4D (Right) Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 6. Interface showing water dynamics simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe
Image Ready. Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 7. Interface showing fire simulation in Autodesk Maya. (Left) and Fume FX (Right)
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

Figure 8. Interface showing fire simulation in Traditional animation in Adobe Image
Source: Felix Osaigbovo and Bennett Onosigho 2024

“WON FEE GBE EKO DE”: TRADITION, PECULIARITIES AND COSTUME

DESIGN OF OBA YESUFU OLOYEDE ASANIKE (1983 -1993)

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Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate the Ibadan royal tradition and uniqueness and design content of costume of Oba Yesufu Asanike, the 37th Olubadan of Ibadan that reigned between 1983 and 1993. It interrogates the royal life of first class Oba who on several occasions deliberately decided to enliven humanity through humility and proximity to his people instead of being confined by protocols attached to the office of an Oba of his status and dignity. It is universally recognised that the office of His Imperial Majesty, Oba, the Olubadan of Ibadanland is a sacred seat, esteemed, honoured and highly respected. Primary data of the study were gathered from the palace griots, members of Asanike family, his neighbours while secondary information were collected through periodicals, archives, journals and internet. Oral interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed. Some of his photographs were taken in royal costume. It was finally discovered that Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanike was unique with his profile of wits, exceptional from his predecessors, and the same time contributed immensely to the peace and development of Ibadanland without compromise. The rancour-free tradition of ascension mode to Olubadan throne has lasted more than a century.

Introduction

Ibadan, capital city of Oyo State, Nigeria is located on seven hills 700 feet (200 metres) about 100 miles (160 km) from the Atlantic coast. It is one of the most populous cities in the country. It was founded by Lagelu, who migrated from Degelu compound, Ajamapo area in Ile- Ife in the middle of the 16th century around 1554 A.D.(Tomori, 2021). In Yorubaland, every village, town, city is ruled by a Chief, Baale or Oba elected or hereditary. An Oba, at all times must act in conformity

with the custom of his people, living and dead. If he failed to do so, he can be censured, fined or deposed. He is more than a symbol and a receptacle of powers but also its embodiment. Every Oba in Ibadan has a unique legacy shaped by destiny. This paper investigates the uniqueness of royal life of Oba Yesufu Asanike and costume design in the context of Ibadan tradition.

Ibadan Tradition

The ascension tradition for the Olubadan of Ibadanland is a unique, non-hereditary, and rotational system based on two chieftaincy lines: the civil (Otun) line previously known as “Egbe Agba” (Elders) and the Military “Balogun” line. Chiefs progress through ranks in their chosen line based on seniority and merit, with vacancies creating a step-by –step elevation to the Olubadan throne (CCII, 2016). When a king dies, the most senior chief from the line opposite to the deceased’s line then ascends to the Olubadan position. Any male born title-holder is a potential king in Ibadanland (Punch). The system is unique to the ancient town. It has the potential of producing the monarch in succession without any rancour.

The Civil (Otun) line is tied to civil administration of 22 steps to reach the apex which is Olubadan. The titles include Otun Olubadan; Osi, Asipa; Ekerin; Ekarun, Abese ; Maye; Ekefa; Agbaakin; Aare Alasa; Ikolaba; Asaju; Ayingun; Aare Ago; Laguna; Oota; Aregbe Omo; Gbonka; Aare Onibon; Bada; Ajia; Jagun Olubadan being the lowest step in ranking. Each prefix stands before Olubadan title in each on the Otun line.(Central Council of Ibadan Indigenes, CCII, 2014). The Balogun military line is traditionally associated with military leadership with 23 steps. It has a sequence of chieftaincies such as: Balogun of Ibadanland; Otun; Osi; Asipa; Ekerin; Ekarun; Abese; Maye; Ekefa; Agbaakin; Aare Alasa; Ikolaba; Asaju; Ayingun; Aare Ago; Laguna; Oota; Aregbe Omo; Gbonka; Aare Onibon; Bada; Ajia; and Jagun Balogun, the lowest step on the line. Each prefix comes before Balogun title in Balogun line (Central Council of Ibadan Indigenes, CCII, 2016).

The successive Olubadans in history spent between between 32 and 35 years mounting the ladder before getting to the Olubadan throne. The long years of waiting always make the successive Olubadan get to the throne at an advanced age (Punch). Historically, the warriors emerged as successive Olubadans until harmonization of the lines. There was another line, the Seriki line which had gone extinct because of the ambiguity in its clause to join the Olubadan line. Ibadan succession line attached value to the issue of seniority as practiced in the military ranking (Punch).

Ibadan traditional rulers were first called Baale until Baale Oyewole (Foko), 1925- 1930. The Baale title changed in 1936 to Oba during the reign of Oba Okunola Abass Alesinloye (popularly called Baba Elelubo). He was Baale (1930-1936) and became Oba 1936-1946. He was the longest serving Olubadan in history. He reigned for 16 years. (the cable, 2021)

Biography of Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanike

Oba Yesufu Asanike was the 37th Olubadan who ascended the throne of his ancestors at an advanced age on the 4th of February, 1983 and died on the 24th of December, 1993. He descended from the great Asanike dynasty of Idi Aro, Ibadan. Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanke reigned for ten glorious years between 1983 and 1993. He came to the throne after the demise of Oba Daniel Tayo Akinbiyi in 1983 who reigned for 5 years, (1977-1982). (CCII, 2025). He was installed as Jagun Balogun at Alafara, Ibadan by the late Oba Isaac Babalola Akinyele. He rose through the ranks to become Olubadan of Ibadanland. In spite of his advanced age, frailty, fragility, he was an Oba epitomized by wisdom, wits, humour, sarcasm and native intelligence (Kehinde, 2025). He was a member of popular (Egbe) society whose Head (Giwa) was Sanusi Adebisi Idikan, that died in 1938. In this Egbe (society) he was in good company of successful merchants such as Otit, Ekolo, Afunleyin, Ladimeji from Isale- Jebu and Adeyemo Owonbuwo from Oopo Yeosa, Ibadan. Asanike's, deputy Emmanuel Adegboyega Adeyemo, another highly educated Ibadan succeeded Oba Asanike in 1994. He died in 1999 (the Bossnewspaper).

His Wits

His reign is remembered not only for peace and development but also for his unique humour and accessibility. He was a king without stiffness, a monarch who dissolved the burden of protocol and made his palace a home for all. History will not forget Oba Asanike for his innocence, simplicity and daily hilarious jokes he cracked unconsciously anywhere he found himself. He was a lively unlettered man who was popular for his plain attitudes, simple but funny characters. He was not a too-official person. On many occasions he deliberately broke protocols to amuse people around him. Asanike's humour became legendary' filling Ibadan with laughter that still echoes today. Some forms of his wits and sarcasm include: Won fee gbe eko de, Oyetan, Bashorun, Alao mi o si nile, Ai dupe ara eni, Ibadan gba Onile, O gba alejo, Iyawo mi ni mo ni e maa so, Emi ni n jakara re, Emi ni Olubadan, Oo lee lo.

Won Fee Gbe Eko De

It was true Oba Asanike was a fun-seeking royal father that on many occasions attended social functions. He attended a birthday party of one of his notable High Chiefs. He was accompanied by another High Chief and Alaafin of Oyo. It was reported Alaafin sat by his side then the other Chief. After the cutting of the birthday cake, some pieces were served on the high table where the trio sat. Alaafin took his own cake, the High Chief Adeyemo did same. While they were eating, Oba Yesufu Asanike became confused and bent to whisper to Alaafin... “Lamidi, Deyemo maa ti jakaa tan, won si maa gbe eko de”, Alaafin was amused that Oba Yesufu mistook the icing – sugar coated cake for local fried beans cake known as “Akara-kengbe”.

Oyetan

Oba Yesufu Asanike was known to have given out highest number of chieftaincy titles in the history of Ibadan (Joseph, 2019). A group of distraught Ibadan Chiefs, perhaps in sync with the military governor’s admonition went to palace to tell Oba Asanike that there was no more chieftaincy titles on the list to give to anybody again. After bestowing numerous titles on different people worthy, they told him, “Kaabiyesi, Oye ti tan”-(the titles are finished). With characteristic wit, Baba replied, “Oye tan itself is a title” and immediately conferred the title “the Oyetan” of Ibadanland on an Igbo businessman (Kehinde, 2016).

Bashorun

Oba Asanike was bold and never afraid of anybody including the military men. A particular Military Governor has subtly accused him of doling out chieftaincy titles rampantly and randomly. Oba Asanike was annoyed and angrily retorted- “Tell him to shut up! He (the governor) is the king in his own domain and I am also a king in my own domain”. The Governor then had Chief M.K.O. Abiola who had recently been conferred with Chieftaincy title of Bashorun of Ibadanland by Oba Asanike in mind. When Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola was conferred with the revered title of Bashorun, critics protested. Asanike silenced them with a political quip. “Anyone who can defeat MKO in the war of politics shall be made a Bashorun”.

Ibadan Gba Onile, O Gba Alejo

Ibadan is hospitable and accommodating to strangers. Oba Asanke appointed a Lebanese, Chief I. Mudah, as Babalaje of Ibadan, embodying the spirit of Ibadan's hospitality: "Ibadan gba onile, o gba alejo" (Ibadan accepts both indigenes and strangers).

"Alao Mi O Si Nile"

When the landline phone rang, Asanike answered, mishearing "Hello" as (Alao) his son's name. He responded, "Alao mi o si nile" (My son, named Alao is not at home). The wit was so popular in the city then that any time it was mentioned people would laugh for a long period. Asanike's reign was filled with warmth, spontaneity and laughter, a reminder that leadership is not only authority but also about humanity (the cable, 2017).

Ai Dupe Ara Eni

Another hilarious moment that spread through the city and beyond happened on New Year Day when his Chiefs were on queue to pay homage on festive season. The first Chief greeted: "Happy New Year". But Oba Yesufu in his innocent characteristic manner responded with, "Aidupe Ara Eni" (meaning You don't need to thank one another). Nearly everyone present in the palace burst into laughter. Oba Yesufu did not take offence in that. He just looked at them and innocently asked: "Se kosi ti gbogbo yin bu s'erin" (meaning Why do you all burst into laughter?)

Iyawo Mi Ni Mo Ni E Maa So

Oba Yesufu Asanike was recorded to have many wives (Oloris) and children. Traditionally, Yoruba royal fathers are polygamous. This is attributed to the belief that they should not reject gifts of any kind be it money, wife or car. It contributes to the tradition of polygamy. Oba Yesufu loved one of his wives so much that he had to hire some undercover security guards to guard and protect her wherever she would go. The guards were to feed him back if there was any suspicious move or if she tried any secret meeting in and out of the palace. It was true the king did not trust her (the boss newspaper).

One afternoon, the queen's guards dragged a palace driver who was caught stealing used tyres before Oba Yesufu Asanike. The poor driver was obviously shivering because he knew the royal father had zero tolerance for stealing....and experientially, he knew the consequences of being caught in the act. In the same vein...the guards were also aware of bountiful rewards for

catching a thief. But surprisingly, Oba Yesufu asked about what the driver stole, he was told it was “used tyres”...he became obviously livid and shouted the guards down fiercely: Iyawo mi ni mo ni ki e mo so, kii se taya moto.. “Watch and spy on my wife not the tyre”. Adeyemo, He released the driver and rebuked the guards for not doing what he hired them for (the cable).

Emi ni njakara Re

Most times, Oba Asanike deliberately looked vacant, as if he would not live tomorrow. He would tell his Otun Olubadan- Deyemo, emi o ti setan a ti ku, emi ni nje Akara re meaning “Deyemo, you will certainly die before me, because I’m not ready to die now”. It was a hard, mild humour.

Emi ni Olubadan

Adeyemo, the Otun Olubadan was once embroiled in a hearty discussion with a visiting governor, Oba Asanike looked quickly looked at him and said- “Deyemo, o so fun Gomina pe emi ni Olubadan ni” meaning Deyemo, did you tell the governor that I am the Olubadan?(Kehinde, 2025)

Oo Lee Lo

As an interesting corollary of Olubadan’s romantic nature, a group of African Americans visited the palace. In his peculiar characteristics Oba Asanike unintentionally toasted one of the beautiful ladies by saying- “Oo lee lo” meaning you won’t go. The exasperated lady assumed it was a royal detention order and quickly raised an alarm. The joke had gone too far, and Oba realized it and apologized by saying “mo fi ba o si e ni” meaning I am only joking with you.

Peace and Development

During his reign, Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanike contributed immensely to the educational development of Ibadan. He facilitated admissions into tertiary institutions of many Ibadan indigenes. He also ensured many infrastructural projects were established in Ibadan employing many sons and daughters of Ibadan who were in key positions of governance. Many Ibadan indigenes were also gainfully employed. Those who were not working for the government, were able to secure facilities for their individual firms and companies.

Design Content of His Royal Costume

The royal costume is *Agbada nla* made of *etu aso ofi*. The embroidery design, *20-U* covers majorly the frontal part of the garment. This can be divided into three segments namely: the neck, the chest and the pocket regions. The neck comprises the semi- circular and half oval that are combination of satin, buttonhole and couching stitches. The oval shapes of the two pockets have two knots (*ibo*) at the top and bottom, of each pocket. The two sleeves were covered inside out with damask with floral design. He dressed in full royal costume. He covered his head with blue *korimagbofo* crown and decked his neck with gold, beaded necklaces and expensive pendants (Fig.1). His wrists are decorated with bead wristlets and silver wrist watch. Oba Asanke is depicted in *alaari* costume. His neck and wrists are decorated in beads. The embroidery designs are *tinko* made of geometric shapes.



Fig 1. His Royal Majesty
Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanike,
The Olubadan of Ibadanland
in *Agbada nla etu ofi*, 1993

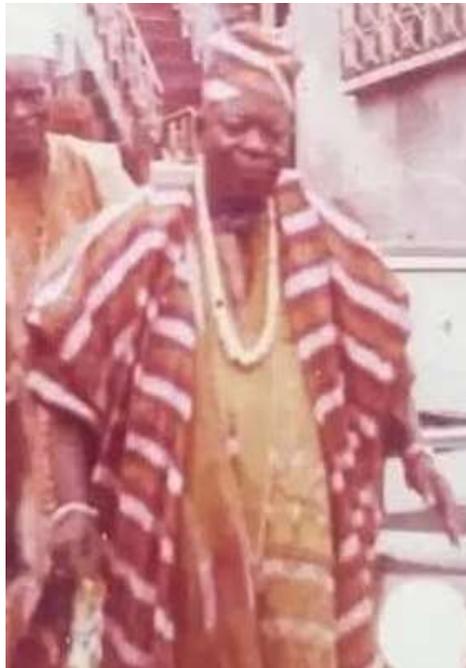


Fig 1. His Royal Majesty,
Oba Yesufu Oloyede Asanike,
The Olubadan of Ibadanland
in *Agbada nla ofi Alaari*, 1985.

Conclusion

This study concludes that since the demise of Oba Yesufu Asanke, it has been very difficult to get somebody of his wits, humour, sagacity and native intelligence to the throne. This paper establishes by illustration the royal life of Oba Yesufu was rancour free, humorous and exciting by attracting the attention of his audience from time to time. He promoted tradition and used his royal position to sustain peace and development of one of the Africa's largest indigenous cities.

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His Imperial Majesty, Oba Saliu Olasupo Akanmu Adetunji, Aje Ogungunniso 1,
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Interviews with Family Members, Former Palace Griots etc.

PRICING CHALLENGES OF SMALL-SCALE TEXTILE PRODUCERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract.

The main thrust of any production process is to make a profit. Thus, at the close of production, prices are ascribed to the products with the intent to make the desired profit. Pricing of goods is about the most complex part of the entire marketing process. The complexity arises from the fact that the marketer has to contend with protecting the business interest of the organization and that of the consumer without conflict. That is, being able to strike an equilibrium between the interests of the marketer and those of the consumer. While ensuring that the cost of production is adequately covered with a good marginal profit, pricing should also be within the reach of the consumer. This paper highlights those pricing challenges being experienced by the small-scale textile producers in Nigeria. There was a series of interactive sessions with some of these small-scale textile producers to facilitate a vivid understanding of the challenges they encounter in pricing their products. This paper has revealed that the right pricing of the products of the small-scale textile producers ensures good marginal profit, which could culminate in the sustenance of production. It is pertinent to note that the adoption of the wrong pricing policy is often the reason the majority of small-scale textile businesses fail in Nigeria. When pricing is very low, it could result in a low profit margin. In the same vein, low pricing could make the prospective customer begin to perceive the product of being of low quality or value, and this could eventually discourage purchase. On the other hand, overpricing can also be problematic. For goods with alternatives, the marketer might just be pricing himself out of the market. This paper is significant because it serves as a watershed for the small-scale textile producers in Nigeria, ensuring the continuity of production.

Key Words: Marketing process, Business interest, Consumer, Equilibrium,
Pricing Challenges, Value, Profit Margin.

Introduction

Pricing is a very vital element in the marketing mix (product, place, promotion and price). While other elements generate cost, pricing is an income generator that facilitates the continued existence of a business enterprise. Virtually all business ventures are propelled by the motive to make a profit. This intent to make a profit is made feasible by the pricing method adopted by the firm.

Invariably, effective pricing is the major factor that ensures the set goal to make a profit is attained. It is pertinent to note that the pricing policy adopted could determine the failure or success of a business venture. Pricing is usually within the control of management, and it links and pays for the various elements of a company's activity geared towards satisfying the numerous needs of the consumers.

Literally, pricing could be defined as the fixing of the amount to be paid for a product offered for sale. However, there have been diverse approaches to the definition of pricing. Looking at pricing from the perspective of the value a small-scale business gets, Taylor (2022) wrote

Pricing is the method of identifying the value a small-scale business can get in exchange for the goods and services they sell. As a small business owner, you hopefully sell goods and services for a price that your target audience is willing to pay. Not only that, but at a price that generates good margins for your business.

Taylor's definition highlights the role of the target customer in the process of pricing. The ability to pay is a vital factor. Price is the value that is put to a product, and it is a result of a complex set of calculations, research and understanding risk-taking ability (The Economic Times-2022). This approach recognizes the complexities involved in pricing. Besides the target customer, several other factors ought to be considered when fixing a price for a product. Sonia (2022) defined pricing in terms of a decision-making process that ascribes value thus: "Pricing refers to the decision-making process that goes into determining a product or service's value. The customer will pay the price specified during the pricing procedure for that good or service". The marketer is often under intense pressure to deliver the high value that equals the price tag on the product

It is important to note that price, value and utility are related concepts. Buttressing this fact, utility is the attribute of a product that brings about the satisfaction of want. Value is the benefit the customer gets from using the product to satisfy a need. Pricing is the method of ascertaining the value of a product in the exchange of goods and services. Price is the monetary value of a product. It is the value expressed in a monetary medium of exchange. Price, which has a great influence on the buyer's behaviour, could be in the form of rents, charges, tuition, fees, or fares.

Pricing should be an offshoot of a vivid understanding of the right prices to be charged to ensure commensurate or sustainable returns. More often than not, most pricing strategies are hinged on prices offered by competitors or a mere option to under-cut them. This could culminate in acute

financial losses in the long run. It is pertinent to note that there are no definite rules for pricing. However, certain factors could be suitable guides.

Determinants of Pricing

Cost: This plays a vital role in the pricing process. Underselling may occur when every cost is not adequately accounted for. The price of a textile product must cover the entire cost of producing the product. In using cost to determine price, three measures must be considered. These are the ratio of fixed to variable cost, the relationship between cost and volume and the cost of a firm relative to its competitor.

Fixed cost is the cost that does not change over a short period of time. It is not altered by the volume of sales or the level of production. Examples are Rent, Salary, Insurance, and Advertisement. Variable cost is the cost that changes in accordance with the level of production. These are those expenses that vary in proportion to the activity of the business. Examples are the cost of labour, Raw materials, and Packaging.

There is a need to examine the relationship between cost and volume. It is a known fact that the unit cost of a product could drop when raw materials are purchased in bulk. Thus, when the volume of production is increased, the unit price could drop as a result of the bulk purchase of raw materials. This is beneficial to both the producer and the consumer.

Demand: Demand is a major factor that could inform the price of any textile product. The buyer is concerned about the utility of the product. The utility is the satisfaction derived from the product. The demand for the product is therefore hinged on the utility and price. How much satisfaction is derived from the product and the ability of consumer to pay are vital factors that determine demand. The forces of demand and supply interplay to set an equilibrium price at which products and services are exchanged. The higher the demand, the higher the price. For a good understanding of the interplay of demand and supply, the marketer should know what quantity will be demanded at varying price levels and ascertain the effects on sales volume as price changes.

Marketing Methods: The type of marketing methods employed could have an impact on pricing. These marketing methods add to the overhead cost on the product. The higher the expenditure on the marketing methods, the higher the unit cost of the product. Examples of marketing methods are Advertising, Salesmen, Packaging, Customer services, and Distribution systems. It is important

to note that the distribution method employed can have an overbearing effect. The longer the chain of distribution, the higher the price. Hence, the small-scale textile producer should always minimize the number of intermediaries or preclude them entirely.

Competition: The number of indigenous fabric decorators has continued to increase over the years. This has culminated in a stiff competition amongst indigenous fabric decorators. Every textile has to compete with an array of substitute textile products. When a product has substitutes from other producers, it becomes imperative to give due attention to the prevailing prices of these substitutes. This is to avoid overpricing or underpricing, which could be detrimental to business. The marketer is compelled to work within the confines of the prevailing selling price of substitute products. The situation is even more difficult for a company that has varying products in the market. This means more competitors to contend with

Social and Legal: The social status of the prospective textile buyer is another cogent factor for pricing. Prices ought to fall within the confines of what the consumer is able or willing to pay. That is, the price should not be beyond the purchasing power of the buyer. Legal factors can also inform pricing decisions. For instance, in the bid to protect consumers' interests or provide an enabling environment for small-scale enterprises, the government could come up with specific laws to restrict price levels. Producers are compelled to adjust their prices to conform to those specified by law.

Economic Situation: When there is a downturn in the prevailing economic situation, it impacts the cost of production of textiles. This is attributed to the increase in the cost of procuring raw materials and an increase in other attendant inputs in the process of production. This, in turn, affects pricing. In addition, a fluctuating exchange rate of the currency of a Nation could make marketers continue to adjust their prices in accordance with transient value of the currency.

Customers: The projected number of textile customers, their purchasing power and buying behaviour are vital factors that could determine the price for a product. A high number of projected customers translates to high demand. This culminates in high pricing. The reverse is the case when the projected number is low.

More often than not, the buying behaviour is informed by the purchasing power. The purchasing of the prospective customer is a vital factor in pricing. Pricing should fall within the confines of the purchasing power of the customers. This makes the purchase very feasible.

CHALLENGES OF PRICING

The challenges of pricing are, to a large extent, offshoots of the determinants of pricing. There is a seeming fluid interrelationship.

Competitors. The ability to effectively manage the activities of textile competitors is vital. While it is good to have comparative prices with competitors, there should be some caution. A competitor might be running at a loss or could have a better, cost-effective operation. Hence, the a danger of maintaining comparative prices without adequate information. The small-scale textile producer is often faced with the challenge of comparative pricing with the large-scale producers. Most customers expect the small-scale producer to sell at the same price as the large-scale producer who mass produces. This often affects the sales of the small-scale producer and could lead to a downturn in business.

Underselling. All costs ought to be adequately accounted for to avoid underselling. Underselling is simply pricing a product below the cumulative cost of the product. The majority of the respondents in this study hinged their pricing more on the cost of production, neglecting other pivotal factors.

Fluctuating Economic Situation. The ever-transient economic situation often has an overbearing effect on the cost of production. This often brings about the problem of competitiveness with the attendant challenges. Harsh economic situation results in an increase in the cost of production, which pushes up the prices of goods. As the unit cost for a textile product increases, the possibility of purchase declines. The marketer is compelled to review prices to propel purchase. If the pricing policy is not well structured, it could greatly affect the profit margin negatively. Alluding to this fact, Malanie (2018) posited “pricing strategically is at the heart of all retail competition, but pricing is no easy task. Getting it wrong can have a dramatic impact on your sales, directly affecting revenue stream”. As the profit margin dwindles, the business enterprise begins to retrogress.

Price Competition. Competition on price is often unhealthy for any kind of business. It could lead to adverse depletion of the profit margin that could result in the crumbling of the enterprise. Rather, the competition should be more on the quality of the textile products offered to consumers. This should be backed with concerted efforts to impress the inherent value of the product on the prospective consumer.

Seasonal textiles. Sales of some textiles could be determined by the prevailing climatic conditions. Hence, some textiles tend to have a life span within a particular season. Thus, a favourable pricing policy has to be put in place to ensure seasonal textiles are sold promptly. Adequate advertising could help prop up sales to prevent or reduce possible losses

Cost of Production. The small-scale textile producer more often than not produces at a higher cost. This is attributable to the fact that raw materials are procured in bits. It is a known fact that the unit cost of a product drops when raw materials are purchased in bulk. Thus, the inability of the small-scale textile producer to do bulk purchases of raw materials puts the unit cost on a perpetual high. This places the small-scale producer in a difficult position of being unable to survive competitive pricing.

Balancing Profitability with Customer Satisfaction. There is a need to be able to strike a balance between the quest for profit and the textile customer's ability or willingness to pay. There should be an established good brand reputation that must be sustained. Brand reputation is the summation of public perception of a product informed by the level of satisfaction derived from the product. Brand reputation, which is pivoted on the quality of the textile product, determines the customer's loyalty to the product. Hence, in addition to ensuring the right pricing, there should be a conscious effort to sustain the quality of the product.

Dynamic pricing is another probable challenge of pricing. This entails hinging pricing on real-time demand, supply, market and competitive pricing. Prices fluctuate based on real-time market conditions. This often results in making pricing uncomfortably transient, causing the prospective textile buyer to be disillusioned. Deliberate effort should be made to ensure a seeming stability of pricing in the midst of several destabilizing factors. This is to avert the possibility of customers perceiving dynamic pricing as being unfair and exploitative

Uncertain Value Proposition. Value proposition is the unique inherent benefit in a product that propels the prospective customers to buy. Most Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in their early stages, suffer from self-doubt. They may worry that their product is not good enough to command a higher price or that customers will not see the value they provide. (David Falzani -2024). With this mindset, prices are kept undeservedly low, and this could cause the business to falter.

Inability to manage the ever-unrelenting pressure to make sales could be a challenge to effective pricing. The fear of having insufficient sales might compel the small-scale textile producers to perpetually keep their prices low to guarantee sales. More often than not, this leads to a minimal profit margin that might not be good enough to sustain the business.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the small-scale textile producer is faced with a myriad of pricing challenges. foremost amongst these challenges is the seemingly high cost of production occasioned by the inability to purchase raw materials in bulk. This proportionately impacts the pricing of their products, culminating in the inability to survive competitive pricing.

Interactions with some small-scale textile producers revealed varied benchmarks for pricing. Olamide (personal communication, 23rd March, 2023) and Mary (personal communication, 30th March, 2023) both stated that aside from the cost of production, the personality of the buyer is another determining factor for pricing. This implies that the pricing of the textile product is based on the purchasing power of the prospective buyer and not the true value of the product. This is a kind of dynamic pricing that seemingly exploits the buyer with high purchasing power. This price discrimination strategy has its short-term gains and attendant challenges. For instance, accurately ascertaining the buyer's purchasing power could be an arduous task. Where there are misjudgments, the buyer could be deterred from purchasing the product. Furthermore, discriminatory pricing could tarnish the reputation of the seller and destroy business relationships when the buyer perceives this pricing strategy as being unfair. Lastly, buyers with low purchasing power might have limited access to the product. This is attributed to the shift of attention to those who can possibly pay more for the product.

Omoruyi (personal communication, 20th March, 2025) and Ochi (personal communication, 24th April, 2023) both hinge their pricing on the cost of production and the time input. According to Omoruyi, the duration of production is often determined by the technique of fabric decoration employed. The longer the duration of production, the higher the price. It is important to note that the challenge that might arise from this kind of pricing is getting the prospective buyer to

comprehend and appreciate the disparity in the duration of production for various decorated fabrics.

Furthermore, Omoruyi stated that the pricing challenges of the small-scale Nigerian indigenous fabric decorators have been greatly compounded by the simulation of these indigenous fabrics for prints (Figs 1, 2 and 3). Lately, the Chinese textile industries have proliferated the simulation of Nigerian indigenous dyed fabrics, culminating in a gross decline in the patronage of these indigenous fabrics.



Fig 1: Simulated dyed fabric in Print. Photo : Aikhionbare Paul, 2025



Fig 2: Simulated Dyed fabric in Print
Photo: Aikhionbare Paul, 2025



Fig 3: Simulated Dyed fabric in Print
Photo: Aikhionbare Paul, 2025

This is attributable to the fact that the simulated prints, which are often perfectly replicated with so much appeal, are lowly priced. Thus, making it almost impossible for the small-scale indigenous fabric decorator to compete. There is indeed a dire need for the Nigerian Government to formulate strategic policies to protect the small-scale textile producers against this kind of external repression.

In furtherance of ameliorating these pricing challenges, the small-scale producers could constitute themselves into cooperative societies. This could make it feasible for them to access more funds, which in turn will facilitate bulk purchase. Hence, paving the way for a positive impact on the unit price of their products. Building congenial relationships with suppliers of raw materials to create an avenue for negotiating better prices could also help to reduce the unit cost of textile products

Training workshops could be organized to enlighten textile producers about market trends. This would help put them in the right stead to effectively ascribe competitive value and prices to their products. There should be a detailed analysis of the cost of production to preclude any form of underselling. In addition, market research could also be carried out to adequately understand the needs and preferences of the prospective customers.

Conclusively, there is a need for the indigenous small-scale textile producer to become very innovative in the midst of the myriad of pricing challenges. For instance, it has been adduced that decorated apparels (Figs 4, 5 and 6) are often more readily sold than decorated fabrics. Deductively, emphasis should be more on the production of decorated apparel that could be ascribed competitive prices that do not deter purchase. Harnessing these thought-out solutions with strategic innovations, the small-scale textile producers could surmount these seemingly overwhelming pricing challenges.



Fig 4: Dyed T-Shirt
Photo: Joan Omoruyi, 2025



Fig 5: Dyed T-Shirt
Photo: Joan Omoruyi, 2025



Fig 6: Dyed T-Shirt
Photo: Joan Omoruyi, 2025

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**PATTERN DRAFTING OF WARP AND WEFT COLOUR ALIGNMENTS DESIGNS,
TRANSCRIPTION AND CONVERSION TO WOVEN FABRICS USING A TWO-SHAFT
TABLE LOOM**

BY

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Abstract

Pattern drafting is the technical details that precede every woven fabric. Pattern drafting enables the weaver or designer to have foreknowledge or to forecast the intended fabric to be produced. It gives the weaver a deeper understanding of the weaving process and eventually enables him or her to produce completely original designs. However, most Nigerian textile designers seem to ignore this aspect of drafting because of the technicalities involved. This paper discusses the pattern drafting of warp and weft colour alignment designs during their conversion to woven fabric. The paper also presents a theoretical transcription of the technical details behind some selected woven samples for easy understanding of textile designers and readers. The studio exploratory method was adopted, highlighting all the stages of production. The studio activities have revealed that intense technicalities are well underway before the emergence of the woven fabric. This paper is significant because it would be a very useful resource material to textile designers, small and medium-scale textile industries, researchers and skill acquisition centres.

Keywords: Pattern Drafting, Warp and Weft, Colour Alignment Designs, Transcription And Conversion, Two-Shaft Table Loom

Introduction

Pattern drafting is very sacrosanct in the fabric weaving process as it enables the weaver or designer to forecast the intended fabric to be woven. In pattern drafting, the weaver or designer works out the intended design accurately on point paper (graph paper) before he or she sets up the loom. This is necessary because it enables the weaver or designer to keep accurate records of all

her woven fabrics. It gives the weaver or designer a deeper understanding of the weaving process and eventually enables her to produce completely original design works. A careful study of pattern drafting helps the designer or weaver to understand and develop new original designs for production and aids her in the analysis of the weaver structure. As stated by Chetwynd (1969:7), “drafting on graph paper is an important method of bridging the gap between the original design idea and the actual fabric. According to her, it is frustrating for the weaver if he is unable to try an idea because he does not know how to thread the loom for it. he can also try out designs on graph paper when no loom is available”. As stressed by Chetwynd (1973:60), “the weaver should preserve, if knowledge and attempt to record all his or her work on point paper (graph paper). This not only enables the weaver to keep a record of work, but gives him or her much deeper understanding of weaving and eventually enables him or her to produce completely original design work”. Similarly, Bird (1974:28) opines that “pattern drafts are usually plotted on graph paper, so that one may see the design as it will appear on the face of the fabric.

Processes of Creating Warp and Weft Colour Alignment Pattern Drafting for a Two-Shaft-Table Loom

Creating warp and weft colour alignment pattern drafting for a two-shaft table loom involves a lot of technical processes. These processes are the threading draft, treadling draft, shedding of the two-shaft table loom and the weave plan.

Threading Draft: This refers to the spaces between the horizontal lines that represent the two shafts (harnesses) when facing the loom from the front (Gyampoh, 2012). The shaft (harness) nearest to the weaver or designer is called shaft (harness) one (1), and the shaft (harness) farther away from the weaver or designer is called shaft (harness) two (2). The mark in the square between the horizontal lines indicates the heald (heddle) on the shaft (harness) through which the thread should be placed.

Treadling Draft: The crosses in the squares between the horizontal lines indicate which shafts (harnesses) should be raised or lowered individually for weaving. As explained by Osaigbovo (2015:55), this is achieved on the two-shaft table loom through a roller-reversing motion.

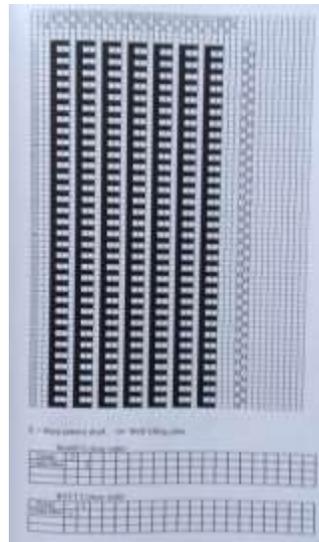
Shedding of the Two-Shaft Table Loom: this means the order in which the roller reversing motion of the two-shaft table loom with a stopper is used or operated for each weft thread in the pattern. The roller reversing motion, when turned away from the weaver, shaft one is raised and when the roller reversing motion is turned towards the weaver, shaft two is raised and shaft one is lowered and vice versa.

Weave Plan: This shows a detailed plan of the pattern, indicating which warp and weft colour order (warp and weft colour alignments) are combined to give the weave plan. The arrangement of colours with plain weave can change the appearance of the plain weave structure entirely. See Figure 1 for the explanation of the threading draft, treadling draft, shedding of the two-shaft table loom and the weave plan.

Pattern Drafts for Warp and Weft Colour Alignments

Some of the pattern drafts produced and transcribed for the purpose of making the paper explicit are shown as follows:

Figure 1



a. Figure 1

1. Indicate the warp threads, A, B, C, D, for 1 (one) repeat for the warp colour order

2. Indicate the number of the weft threads 1 to 52, 1 indicating the first weft thread and 2 indicating the second weft thread. Weft threads 1 to 2, end one repeat of the weft colour order.
3. Mark out the warp and weft colour order. Call these colours BLACK and WHITE for easy working. In Figure 1, the warp colour order is:

2 Black 2 White

Indicated by the vertical lines and spaces under the threading draft. The weft colour order is:

1 Black 1 White

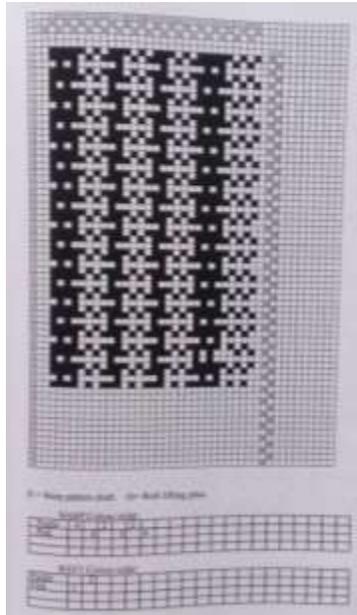
Indicated by the horizontal lines and spaces besides the weave plain as shown:

4. Start reading across the first weft thread numbered 1 in the weave plan
5. Square 1A shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1A black.
6. Square 1B shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 1B black.
7. Square 1C shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1C black.
8. Square 1D shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1D white.

b. Figure 1

1. Read across the second weft thread numbered 2 in the weave plan
2. Square 2A shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 2A black.
3. Square 2B shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2B white.
4. Square 2C shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 2C white.
5. Square 2D shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2D white.

Figure 2



To construct the colour and weave draft for figure 2, the researcher adopted the methods as stated below.

1. Indicate the warp threads, A, B, C D, E, F, G, H for 1 (one) repeat for the warp colour order.
2. Indicate the number of the weft threads 1 to 52, 1 indicating the first weft thread and 2 indicating the second weft thread. Weft threads 1 to 5, end one repeat of the weft colour order.
3. Mark out the warp and weft colour order. Call these colours BLACK and WHITE for easy working. In figure 2, the warp colour order is:

4 Black 4 White

Indicated by the vertical lines and spaces under the threading draft. The weft colour order is:

2 Black 1 White

1 Black 1 White

Indicated by the horizontal lines and spaces besides the weave plain as shown:

4. Start reading across the first weft thread numbered 1 in the weave plan
5. Square 1A shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1A black.
6. Square 1B shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 1B black.

7. Square 1C shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1C black.
8. Square 1D shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 1D black.
9. Square 1E shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1E black.
10. Square 1F shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1F white.
11. Square 1G shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1G black.
12. Square 1H shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1H white.

b. Figure 2

1. Read across the second weft thread numbered 2 in the weave plan
2. Square 2A shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 2A black.
3. Square 2B shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 2B black.
4. Square 2C shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 2C black.
5. Square 2D shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 2D black.
6. Square 2E shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2E white.
7. Square 2F shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 2F black.
8. Square 2G shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2G white.
9. Square 2H shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 2H black.

c. **Figure 2**

1. Start reading across the third weft thread numbered 3 in the weave plan
2. Square 3A shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 3A white.
3. Square 3B shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 3B black.
4. Square 3C shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 3C white.
5. Square 3D shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 3D black.
6. Square 3E shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 3E with white.
7. Square 3F shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 3F with white.
8. Square 3G shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 3G white.
9. Square 3H shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 3H with white.

d. **Figure 2**

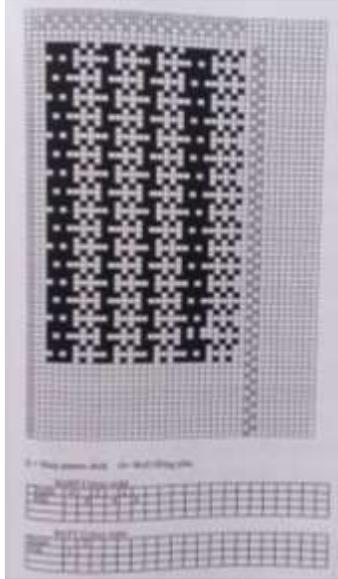
1. Start reading across the fourth weft thread numbered 4 in the weave plan
2. Square 4A shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 4A black.
3. Square 4B shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 4B black.
4. Square 4C shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 4C black.
5. Square 4D shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 4D black.
6. Square 4E shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 4E with white.
7. Square 4F shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 4F black.

8. Square 4G shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 4G white.
9. Square 4H shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 4H black.

e. Figure 2

1. Start reading across the fifth weft thread numbered 5 in the weave plan
2. Square 5A shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 5A white.
3. Square 5B shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 5B black.
4. Square 5C shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 5C white.
5. Square 5D shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 5D black.
6. Square 5E shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 5E white.
7. Square 5F shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 5F white.
8. Square 5G shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 5G white.
9. Square 5H shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 5H white.

Figure 3



1. Indicate the warp threads, A, B, C D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N for 1 (one) repeat for the weave plan as shown.
2. Indicate the number of the weft threads 1 to 52, 1 indicating the first weft thread and 2 indicating the second weft thread. Weft threads 1 to 2, end one repeat of the weft colour order.
3. Mark out the warp and weft colour order. Call these colours BLACK and WHITE for easy working. In figure 3 the warp colour order is:

4 Black 4 White
2 Black 4 White

Indicated by the vertical lines and spaces under the threading draft. The weft colour order

is:

1 Black
1 White

Indicated by the horizontal lines and spaces besides the weave plain as shown:

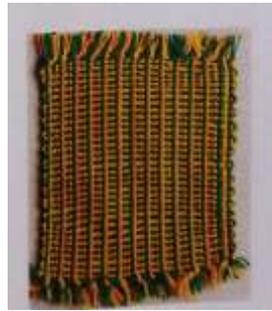
4. Start reading across the first weft thread numbered 1 in the weave plan
5. Square 1A shows weft on the face of the fabric as illustrated. As the weft is black, fill in square 1A black.
6. Square 1B shows warp on the face of the fabric. As the warp is black, fill in square 1B black.
7. Square 1C shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1C black.
8. Square 1D shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 1D black.
9. Square 1E shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1E black.

10. Square 1F shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1F white.
11. Square 1G shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1G black.
12. Square 1H shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1H white.
13. Square 1I shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1I black.
14. Square 1J shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 1J black.
15. Square 1K shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1K black.
16. Square 1L shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1L white.
17. Square 1M shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is black, fill in square 1M black.
18. Square 1N shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 1N white.

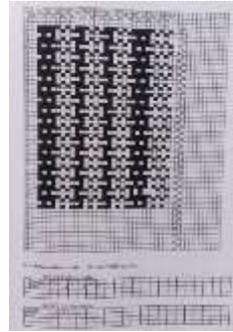
b. Figure 3

1. Read across the second weft thread numbered 2 in the weave plan
2. Square 2A shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 2A black.
3. Square 2B shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2B white.
4. Square 2C shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is black, fill in square 2C black.
5. Square 2D shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2D white.
6. Square 2E shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 2E white.
7. Square 2F shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2F white.
8. Square 2G shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white, fill in square 2G white.
9. Square 2H shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white, fill in square 2H white.
10. Square 2I shows warp on the race of the fabric. Since the warp is black fill square 2I black.
11. Square 2J shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white fill square 2J white.

12. Square 2K shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white fill square 2K white.
13. Square 2L shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white fill square 2L white.
14. Square 2M shows warp on the face of the fabric. Since the warp is white fill square 2M
15. Square 2N shows weft on the face of the fabric. Since the weft is white fill square 2N.



Type of loom- Two-Shaft Table Loom (Roller Reversible)
 No of Shafts- 2
 No of Healds Per Shaft – $72 \times 2=144$
 Reed Count – 3 ends per cm
 Yarn Type – Acrylic
 Cloth Width 15cm
 Cloth Length – 15cm
 Warp Colour Order -2Green, 2 Golden Yellow
 Weft Colour Order – 1 Green, 1 Golden Yellow



Type of loom- Two-Shaft Table Loom (Roller Reversible)
 No of Shafts- 2
 No of Healds Per Shaft – $72 \times 2=144$
 Reed Count – 3 ends per cm
 Yarn Type – Acrylic
 Cloth Width 15cm
 Cloth Length – 15cm
 Warp Colour Order -4Purple, 4 Pink, 2 Purple, 4 Pink, 2 Purple, 4 Pink
 Weft Colour Order – 2 Purple, 1 Pink



Type of loom- Two-Shaft Table Loom (Roller Reversible)
 No of Shafts- 2
 No of Healds Per Shaft – $72 \times 2=144$
 Reed Count – 3 ends per cm
 Yarn Type – Acrylic
 Cloth Width 15cm
 Cloth Length – 15cm
 Warp Colour Order -4Purple, 4 Pink, 2 Purple, 4 Pink, 2 Purple, 4 Pink
 Weft Colour Order – 2 Purple, 1 Pink

The paper concludes that pattern drafting in textile design remains a core area that precedes the weaving proper.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that pattern drafting is very crucial in the area of fabric construction as it enables the weaver to keep an accurate record of work for reference purposes. Hence, it is regarded as the core area that precedes weaving, that eventually aids replication of the woven fabric designs when the need arises. Transportation of each pattern draft in this paper is an attempt to explain the movement of each of the warp and weft yarns on the loom for a better understanding of textile designers. The technical details, simply explained and clearly understood by the textile designers, would enable them to set their two-shaft table looms and produce their woven fabrics based on the pattern drafts some warp and weft colour alignments pattern drafts were created and few of them were transcribed to reveal the technical details before converting them to woven fabrics. This paper has contributed to knowledge as it has revealed the technicalities involved in the creation of woven fabrics. It is hoped that textile designers, textile students as well as small scale textile cottage industries would find this paper as a useful reference material for taking accurate records for their woven fabric designs.

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SYNTHESIS OF DIGITAL ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ILLUSTRATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE FALSE PROPHET

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Abstract

This studio-based exploratory research investigates the integration of digital art and photography in the creation of illustrations, drawing upon the biblical concept of the False Prophet as presented in Matthew 7:15–20. Digital photography uses camera and computer packages that allows for photo editing in creating pictures, while digital art is the use of digital tools for picture making. It involves all works of art that are electronically created with the aid of digital tools like computer, tablets, digital pen and Software Applications that allows for digital art. Photographic illustrations produced through conventional print techniques, such as stencil and silk screen printing, were historically used for decoration and instructional purposes. However, in the contemporary digital age, these methods often appear less appealing and less presentable compared to modern approaches to art-making. People appreciate art forms that are digitally produced for decoration. This study therefore attempt to synthesize photography and digital art to create a beautiful digital photographic art illustration. This research will create digital photographic illustration that will reveal deep interpretations of the selected word of God thereby creating aesthetically pleasing photographic image as artwork for decoration and instructional material. Sketchbook App in Graphic Drawing Tablet will be used to create the photographic illustration. The processes will establish a new artistic character, fostering the emergence of innovative skills in picture-making.

Key words: Digital Art, Digital Photography, Digital Illustration and False Prophet

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, innovation drives progress and lifestyle improvement. Any person or field that resists change risks fading into irrelevance. The artist and art profession are not exempted and should seek a better way to create, communicate, decorate and entertain using letters and images

Art is a product of creativity. Artists communicate with visual images and have no limits in the use of materials and styles in the production of art works. Modern artists are presently breaking away from the conventional style, techniques, method and materials. They now seek modern materials, tools, techniques, and methods in order to align with the demands of the present digital world. Digital art are all art work that utilize computer and software applications.

Graphics artist uses visual images or designs on surfaces such as walls canvas, screen, paper or product to inform, educate, illustrate, or entertain their audience. Graphics involves communication, creativity, decoration, entertainment via letters and images. The images may be captured, drawn, printed, or painted, among other techniques, to more effectively convey information to the viewer

Photographic illustrations that were created using the conventional print technique such as stencil prints, silk screen prints for decoration often are not quite pleasurable and presentable in this digital age of creating art forms. People appreciate art forms that are digitally produced for decoration. This was supported by Emmanuel, & Feyisope, (2014) where they concluded that Photojournalists in Nigeria prefer digital camera to analog camera and that the use of digital camera/photography has improved photographic quality in Nigerian magazines hence recommend digital camera/photography for better and higher quality photographic production.

Artists are embracing newer techniques and style to meet the present demand of their audience. This study therefore attempt to synthesize photography and digital art to create a beautiful digital art illustration that will reveal deep interpretation of Biblical story of the false prophets according to the Bible book of Matthew 7:15–20.

This studio-based research will be used to answer the following questions. How can digital art be synthesized with photography to create illustration that will interpret the word of God? What photographic illustrations would be generated from the biblical story of the false prophet? What lessons and instructions could be learned from the Biblical story of the false prophet?

This study introduces a new and distinctive style of graphic photographic illustration, integrating digital art and photography to enhance visual communication. It further encourages the synthesis of these two mediums as a means of advancing contemporary picture-making. It will also reveal the interpretation of the Biblical story of the False Prophets and their activities. The following materials: Personal Computer, Samsung Galaxy Tab S4, Digital Camera, Samsung S Pen and

Sketchbook Application among others were used to produce this photographic illustration. This is a studio-based exploratory research synthesizing digital art and photography to create the photographic illustrations of the Biblical story of the False Prophets. A review of books, journal articles, and other relevant sources was conducted to gather information on the subject under investigation.

Review of Related Literature and Practice

Digital Photography

Digital Photography is the process of capturing and manipulating images using digital technology. It involves capturing the images with digital camera and all that the photographer does with the image in digital packages that allow for photo editing. The editorial process involves such stages as colour enhancement, cropping, re-sizing the image, balancing, removing dust and other editing of the image to come out better as a photograph.

Digitalartsblog.com (2023) affirmed “Digital photography as the process of capturing images using cameras or other devices that record light electronically. It equally stated that digital photography aim to capture and represent reality faithfully without extensive manipulations keeping the images produced as realistic representation of the scene or subject photographed.” From the above definition of digital photography, it is clear that digital photography involves the use of digital camera and other photographic devices that record light electronically either for viewing, editing and printing that must not be out of the original subject matter. When a photograph of a man running is digitally altered to include a lion behind him, the image ceases to be pure photography and instead becomes digital art.

Digital Art

Digital art is the use of digital tool for picture making. It includes all works of art that are electronically created with the aid of digital tools like computer, digital camera, tablets, digital pen and Software Applications that allows for digital art. Digital art are created by using digital techniques and tools in making pictures. DXA Group, (2024) stated that “digital art are created using technology like computers, tablets and cameras thereby making it a versatile and accessible form of contemporary art. A defining characteristic of digital art is its capacity to manipulate and edit images, enabling the creation of new forms and styles that are unattainable with analog media. Digital art thus involves producing visual expressions that have not previously existed. It is the

thought or the feelings of the artist about things place or people that are created with digital media. It is different from digital photography. Digital photography captures images and allows for editing while preserving the integrity of the original event.

Digital art involves creating unique image with the tablet or computer that may involve captured photographs or painted images on the computer or tablet and has no limit in creating style and techniques. Samuel, Priscilla, Eric, & Mensah, (2023) stated that “digital art techniques offer opportunities for innovation, creativity, self-expression, efficiency, and versatility. Digital art harnesses modern technologies and software tools to explore diverse artistic styles across multiple mediums in a risk-free environment. It also facilitates effective collaboration among artists and can be easily shared with a wide audience at the artist’s discretion.

Illustration/Digital Illustration

Illustration is the visual image in graphics design that gives deeper interpretation and understanding of the subject matter. Illustration can stand alone or complement text for clarity. Illustration functions as a medium for interpreting and simplifying difficult or complex issues and terminology, offering clearer meaning and fostering deeper understanding for the viewer. It is digital when it uses digital tools (computers, graphic drawing tablets, electronics pen and software application).

Digital illustration is the use of tools from computer software to create illustrations. Every tool like pencil, art brush, hairbrush, eraser, atomizer, ruler, layout, and filter effects, to mention a few, are represented digitally in an illustration software (Onwuekwe 2012:1) He further described digital illustrations as computer illustrations or digital drawings and paintings which is possible with the help of the Graphical user Interface, alongside the hardware devices.

Illustrations are pictures that come in different forms; paintings, drawings, animations, photographs and sketches depending on the subject matter and most recently digital illustration. According to Irvweieri (2022), “illustration is about explaining or clarifying something through drawing, painting or printed work. It is a visual interpretation of a text or a concept.” Illustration helps for easy understanding of a complex concept. This study will therefore illustrate the story of the false prophets for a proper understanding of the Bible potion.

Yueying C., (2018) stated that “illustration is developed with writing and gives text a better interpretation through painting techniques so that readers can have a deeper impression and understanding of the writing. Illustration appears mostly in pictures, with certain independence. If accompanied by words, it enhances their appeal to readers through visual effect, rather than to narrate.” Illustration gives deeper interpretations to words and showcases the issue as real as possible. People presently do not go for a written text but spend time in viewing images and short videos and this is why Facebook App, WhatsApp and other social media apps that allows for images viewing are excelling. Osaigbovo, (2025) generally describe illustration as text pictographic material enhancer or amplifier that can still appear without text.

The Theme (False Prophets)

The world is replete with stories of insecurity and moral decadency. Every day, one hears a story of man’s inhumanity to man. Though there are many religious houses and knowledge available to give moral direction, yet one cannot sleep with two eyes closed. All these are because of wrong teachings and doctrines. Every person in the society wants to make money. Greed and the love of money has overwhelmed us. Even in most religious houses, the real instructions have been missed because of greed and compromise. One cannot give what one doesn’t have, a Lion begets a Lion and a Goat begets a Goat.

Jesus Christ stated in the book of Matthew 7:15-20, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Many people had forgotten about the commandment and the judgment of God and had gone astray. All this recent occurrences in our society and the word at large are the result of the false prophet instructions.

Synthesis and the skill involved

Synthesis of digital art and photography for illustration is the process of combination of digital art and photography to create better illustrations unachievable in realistic photography. Many artist and advertising agencies combines digital drawing/art with photography to facilitate the costumer’s and viewer’s interest.

Morwani and Agarwal (2024) affirmed that photography and illustration are two different art forms that can be combined to create a new and interesting art style. They sampled different art works of artists that explored digital photo drawing/illustration thus drawing directly on an existing photograph to create a new art form as desired by the artist. Photographs are combined with drawing or digital art in various formats according to the desire of the artist. In figure 2 of this study, wolf's head was drawn on a sheep giving the animal a different look thus half sheep and half wolf (sheep body and wolf head). The ribs of the Sheep were painted to create lean and skinny creating the impression of suffering.

The Digital Arts Process

Digital art describes all the art works created using digital aid materials. Digital art are art works that are produced using computer and tablet in soft copy but could be printed to be viewed in hard copy. Here the researcher with the aid of digital tools and materials create illustrations that are merged with photography to create the complete synthesis of digital art and photography illustration

This study is a studio based exploratory research involving series of experimentation. The researcher used Samsung Galaxy Tab S4 and the Samsung Pen (Screen Touch/Digital Pen) to draw directly on Sketchbook Application Software to create the digital art illustrations. In some cases, the model captured with the digital Camera are imported/copied into the Sketchbook interface and a layer is then added above the image layer and the image is then traced onto the new layer above and thereafter the image layer is then deleted. The researcher then paints the traced shape of the image as desired. This process completes the digital art.

Photography Process

Photography illustration process involves capturing the model and all that the photographer does with the images to come out better. The researcher pose model in action and capture the model with the digital camera and the image is then edited with Photoroom App. In the Photoroom, the background of the images was removed. This is done by clicking transparent background on the Photoroom interface that led me to my gallery and choose a particular image. The background was automatically removed when it has data. Photoroom is a paid App. The edited image are then

copied to the Sketchbook App Interface and more illustrations are made directly on the edited image/images to create the complete synthesis of digital art and photography illustration.

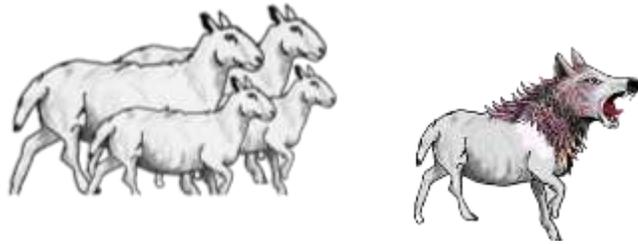


Figure 1 drawing and painting
of the Sheep

Figure 2 drawing of the Wolf
in Sheep clothing

Figure 3 the digital art

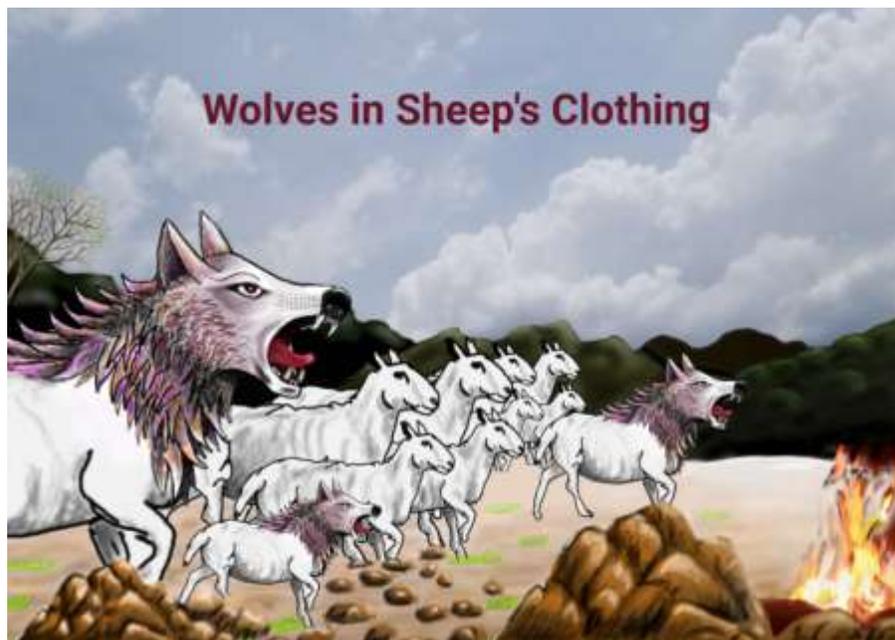


Figure 4. EBWEBIRUE O. Solomon, *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing*, Synthesis of Digital Art and
Photography for Illustration (29cm x 41cm) 2025

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing is a pictorial illustration of three howling wolves in sheepfold leading the Sheep in a desert and rocky environment with a burning fire at the end. This illustration is used in this study as an instructional material to depict the Biblical teaching of the false prophets by Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew chapter 7 verses 15.

From the illustration, the false prophets are the wolves leading the flocks astray in a desert land instead of a pasture. And the flocks; the supposed children of God are slim and are heading to eternal condemnation being led by the wolves/false prophets. The false prophets have no word of God thereby starving the children of God with the right word and doctrine. This is why there are insecurity and stories of man inhumanity to man in our society today and the word at large. 2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

After removing the background of the photograph of a sheep in the Potoroom App, then copied it into the Sketchbook App Interface in Samsung Galaxy Tab S4 with Samsung S Pen (Digital Pen). I duplicated the image by copy and paste considering the law of perspective in different layers as in Figure 1. The head of the wolf was drawn and painted in Sketchbook interface directly with the digital pen and merged with the image of a sheep as in Figure 2. The foreground was painted and the layer was taken to the back to allow view of the other image layers as in Figure 3. The images were merged with the photograph of the sky and the fire is snapped with the digital camera to create the complete synthesis of digital art and photography illustration as in Figure 4. The illustration could be printed and used for decoration or shared in soft copies as an instructional material to impart the fear of God on our children.

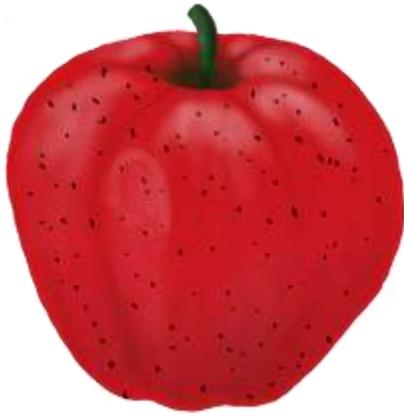


Figure 1 Figure 5 Drawing and Painting of the Fruit



Figure 6 Editing of the photograph

Figure 5 is the digital drawing and painting of the fruit. In Figure 6 model was set to pose as being worshiping and photographed. The background was removed as usual and the images are arranged in Sketchbook interface. The images are then merged with the fruits as in as Figure 7.



Figure 7 Merging the Fruit and the Photograph



Figure 8. Drawing and Painting of the Tree

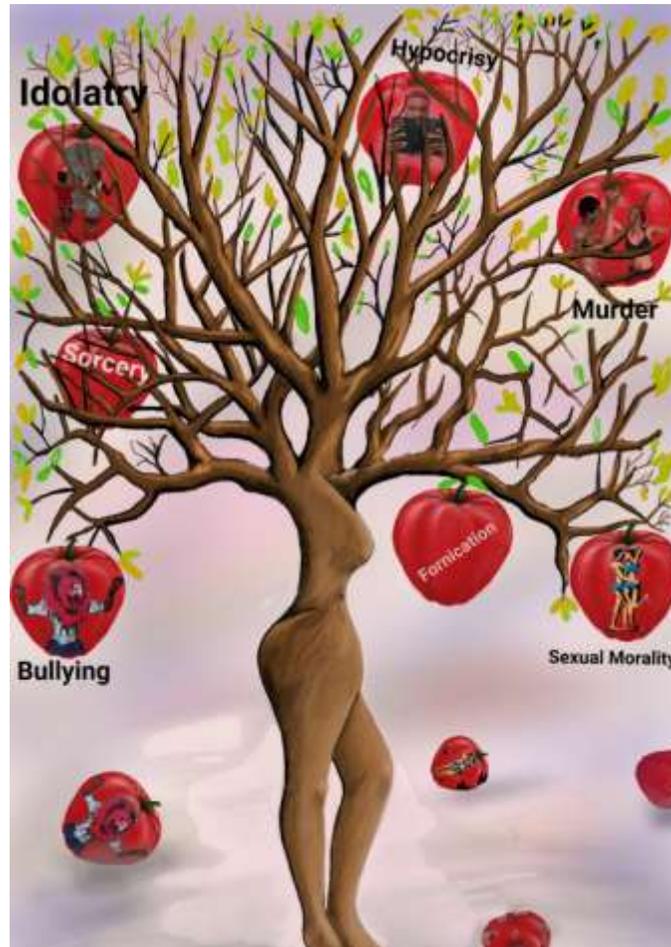


Figure 8. EBEWEBIRUE O. Solomon, *By Their Fruits We Shall Know Them*. Synthesis of Digital Art and Photographic Illustration (29cm x 41cm) 2025

By Their Fruits we shall know them is a pictorial illustration that shows a picture of a dry tree having a naked female shape at the trunk and dry branches, leaves and succulent fruits at the tree top. The fruits have pictures embedded in them others were inscribed with words. Some of the fruits were on the floor.

In this study, the phrase “*By their fruits we shall know them*” is employed to signify the activities and manifestations of false prophets as recorded in Matthew 7:15–20. The image of a dry and barren tree represents false prophets who lack knowledge of God’s word and fail to provide proper guidance for the flock. The fruits symbolize their characteristics and qualities, while the succulent nature of the fruits illustrates the sweet yet deceptive messages they deliver—pleasant to hear but ultimately poisonous to the soul. In verse 18 and 19 it was recorded that “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit or a bad tree bear a good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and

thrown into the fire.” In biblical symbolism, the tree represents human beings. Accordingly, this study depicts the tree in human form. Any individual who fails to do the will of God and engages in evil, as illustrated by the fruits above and as stated in Scripture, shall be cut down and cast into the fire. Heaven and hell are realities, and the choice rests with each person. Ultimately, every individual shall reap the consequences of his actions.

Conclusion

From the works produced in the studio, it was observed that illustration can be derived from the biblical account of false prophets in Matthew 7:15–20. This study encourages the synthesis of digital art and photography in illustration. Furthermore, digital art illustrations may be traced, photographed, or painted, existing as digital art even without displaying the original photograph. Images can also be resized and merged with photographs to create new compositions.

Digital art and photography were successfully synthesized in this study and had been used to create beautiful illustrations and interpret the word of God according to the book of Matthew chapter 7 verses 15 to 20. The work produced can be used for decorations and as an instructional material to teach and create the fear of God to the young ones thereby making the world a better place for us all.

In Plate 8, the manifestations and deeds of false prophets are vividly illustrated through the symbolism of the fruits. Plate 4 further depicts false prophets as wolves, leading the flock of God astray and ultimately into everlasting punishment.

This study has demonstrated a new and unique style of graphic photographic illustration, encouraging the synthesis of digital art and photography in picture-making. It further reveals the interpretation of the biblical account of false prophets and their activities, as recorded in Matthew 7:15–20.

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KEY:

The highlighted portions represent the reviewer's corrections compared to the author's original copy.

COMMENT

Your paper introduces an important topic and provides a clear overview. However, the analysis feels somewhat limited in scope. For instance, the illustration on the wolves in sheep's clothing could benefit from more detailed references. Also comprehensively explain the illustration used as an instructional material to depict the biblical teaching of the false prophets.

Expanding on these areas would give the reader a more comprehensive understanding and enrich your discussion.

**THE RETURN OF THE BENIN BRONZES ARTEFACTS:
HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, ECONOMICAL, POLITICAL, AND
ARTISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN RESTITUTION**

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Abstract

The issue of the ancient Bini in terms of their guild in art practices in bronze casting which is referred to as the cult art is well known to the entire world. Their art work brought the kingdom into limelight in the historiography of art, as well as expose them into problem, which resulted to the European invasion in 1897 tagged Benin massacre. The objectives of the Benin kingdom were to generate a strong revenue based in the kingdom through the production of their bronze art works that was not known in the entire world of art. This spurred the Benin guild to produce court art with the sole authority and sponsorship of the monarch. The artistic resources of the Benin Kingdom were placed under the control of the monarch. To achieve this, the Oba of Benin established the guild of court artists, ensuring that all artistic production—especially bronze casting, ivory carving, and other sacred works—was supervised directly by the palace. The attraction of the bronze objects was when the Europeans visited Benin kingdom much earlier than the year 1897 with firearms. This development did not go well with the Europeans, as the eventual restitution of the looted bronze objects profoundly affected them sociologically, economically, artistically, and culturally, while also damaging their global image. These effects, which the Europeans found difficult to manage given the artistic implications within the global community and the shame associated with looting as a grave mistake on their part, eventually compelled them to heed the voices of various organizations calling for the restitution of the stolen bronze works from the Benin Kingdom.

Keywords: Europeans, Benin bronzes, Art work, Restitution, Return

Brief History of Ancient Benin Kingdom

The Benin kingdom is located in present day southern Nigeria. It was one of the most famous powerful pre-colonial state in West Africa. Its origin dates back to the 10th century A.D. when rulers known as the Ogisos governed the kingdom. The Ogiso dynasty collapsed in the 12th century after internal disputes, and leadership was sorted from the neighbouring Ife kingdom (Ogienakhi 2025) in (Bradbury 1956).

In 13th century, Prince Oranmiyan of Ife was invited to rule the kingdom, but later returned back home leaving his own son Eweka 1 to rule as the first Oba of Benin in (c. 1200-1235). His reign marked the beginning of the Oba dynasty that established a centralised monarchy (Egharevba, 1968) in (Ogieriakhi, 2025).

The kingdom experienced its golden age between the 15th and 17th centuries under the leadership of Oba Ewuare the Great (1440-1473) Benin expanded its territory, reorganized its political structure and transformed the kingdom into a highly fortified urban centre with walls and moats.

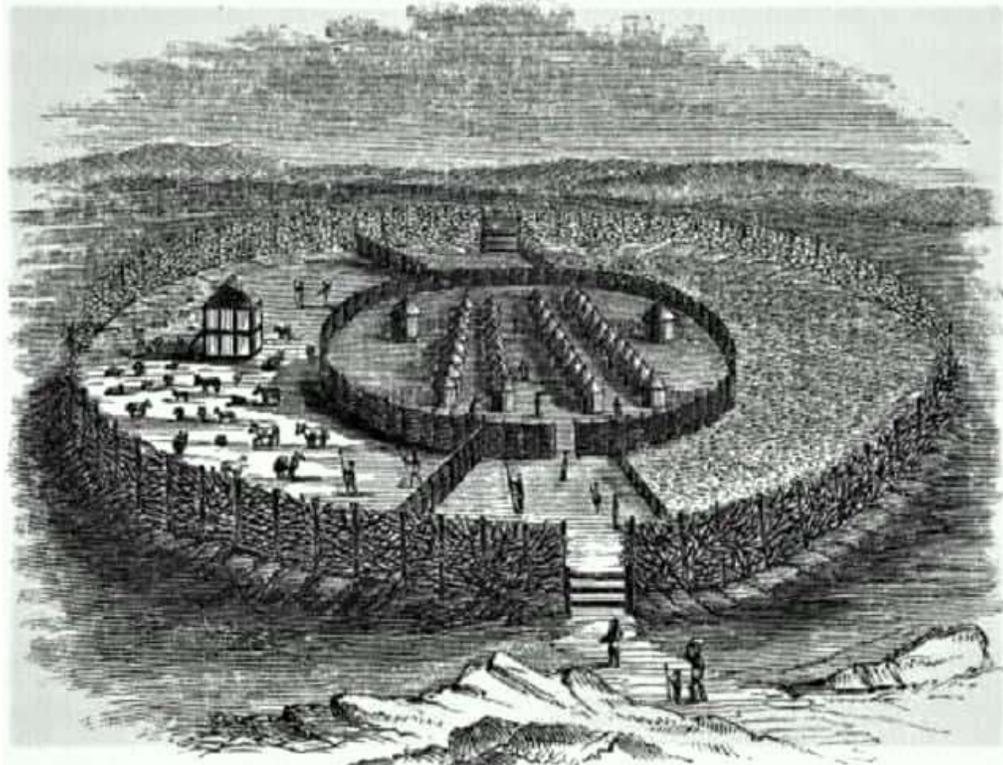


Fig. 1: The great Benin moat wall. Known to be about 16,000km in length

His successor, Oba Esigie (1504-1550) strengthened the kingdom through diplomatic and trade relation with the Portuguese who first made contact to the Benin kingdom (Ryder 1969). This exposure of Benin artefacts to Europeans fueled their desire to seize them by force, a process that culminated in the 1897 invasion, commonly referred to as the Benin Massacre. This period also saw the flourishing of Benin art works especially the bronze works which become globally renowned for their craftsmanship (Ryder, 1969).



Fig. 2: Bronze of Oba Ewuare I, the Great (1440–1473), flanked by guards

Benin economy was sustained by its control of trade in goods such as pepper, ivory, slaves exchanged with Europeans for fire arms, brass, coral beads, textile materials, books etc. (Roese, 2000). Albeit from the 18th century, the kingdom faced political decline due to internal crisis which weakened trade and increasing the western dominance to the great kingdom.

The 1897 Benin massacre by the British punitive expedition invaded Benin, burned down the city and exiled Oba Ovonranwen Nogbaisi in (1888-1914) and looted thousands of artworks including bronze works and taken away to Europe. This marked the political independence of the kingdom as it was incorporated into the British colony of southern Nigeria (Phillips, 1997) and (Ogieriakhi, 2025).



Fig. 3: Raided Benin artifacts by British forces. Soldiers posing with looted artifacts.
Picture taken in 1897.

Today the legacy of Benin kingdom endures through its artworks, culture and tradition which continues to define the Benin – Edo identity and inspire global recognition of African heritage has been brought back by the Europeans to the Oba of Benin palace, though not at the satisfaction of the people of the kingdom as much is still not returned compared to what was stolen at that time. An adage in my place says that a thief that has agreed that he stole only four tubers of yam from the rolls of yam on the barn no doubt means that he has stolen more than a roll of yam not just only four tuber of yam as he alleged, In light of the foregoing discussion, this paper will examine the restitution of the looted Benin artefacts by European forces and their eventual return to the Oba of Benin.

Art – Many people find it difficult to comprehend what art is. This is inspite of art having always been part of man (Diakparome, 2019). Art was man’s earliest reliable mode of expression of his thoughts within his surroundings. This may be why art is integral to the essence, aspiration, and

achievement of many societies, including those that are Nigerians. However, the artist will continue to be accused of misrepresentation, excessive exaggeration, vulgarism and even, engaging in soliloquy. (Diakparome, 2019). As societies developed overtime, the type of art produced changed, the mode of the consumption of the art also changes. These changes in types and consumption patterns are responsible for the characterization of modern art with individualism, and led to changes of elitism and obscurantism which are considered to be responsible for the aesthetic atrophy currently pervasive in contemporary Nigerian society (Diakparome, 2019).

According to Diakparome (2019) postulated that the mystery associated with art and the artist is traceable to the legend about two ancient Greek painters Parrhasius and Zeuxis and according to Diakparome (2019) and (Nina Tokhtamau Valetova, 2017) the legend surrounds a supposed contest between Parrhasius and Zeuxis in realism. According to Diakparome, (2019) in (Valetova, 2017) Zeuxis painted some grapes so believably that flocks of birds flew down to eat them. Parrhasius on his own, painted a curtain that appeared to be covering his (Zeuxis) painting, misleading Zeuxis who tried to draw it aside. According the legend, Zeuxis said and quote “I misled birds but Parrhasius misled Zeuxis”

Diakparome quotes

“The myths and legends about art and artists have continued to grow exponentially since the 20th century. These myths include the perception that to create good art, an artist must suffer; that is many artists are alcoholics, drug addicts and frivolous people who have no traditional family values and that most artist especially geniuses, suffer from mental illness, artist are lazy, that art is a poor profession whose works will be sold and have a high price tag only after death an artist can be recognized. (Diakparome, 2019)”

In the light of these multifarious myths about the artist their product art has been looked into by different scholars ranging from the artists themselves, philosophers, anthropologists, historians, ethnographers and art critics in different ways based on their personal experiences and on the various ways in which art manifests itself or act on the percipient. Thus, to some people art is the ability to draw, paint or produce craftwork or the ability to perform any of the three. For the purpose of this paper, art according to (Egonwa, 1988), Art is the product of human skill and creativity,

often exercised by a gifted individual to express an idea through a chosen medium. When considered apart from any practical function, its primary purpose is to provide a rewarding emotional experience. It follows, therefore, that as long as a human-made object is capable of evoking satisfaction or emotional response, it qualifies as a work of art. However, this satisfaction is not without limitation, for the value of art is shaped by cultural context, individual perception, and the boundaries of human creativity

What are Artifacts

These are valuable objects made or used by humans. It has cultural historical and scientific significance. It can provide valuable insights into past civilizations, culture or events. Artefacts includes ancient tools, pottery, jewelries, art works, such as sculptures or paintings, historical documents, archeological findings and traditional clothing.

What is Restoration

This refers to the act of returning or compensating for something that was lost, stolen, or damaged, often in a historical or cultural perspective, it includes the returning of cultural artefacts or art works to their countries of origin or providing financial compensation for past injustices or losses. Restitution according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, International Students' Edition sees restoration as aims to address historical wrongs, promote justice and restore dignity.

The Benin bronzes looted by British soldiers during the 1897 invasion serve as a quintessential example of restitution, illustrating the ongoing efforts to return some of these stolen bronze sculptures to their rightful custodians in Benin.

Below are some of the restitution made by British government to the great Benin kingdom.

Looting Incident

In 1897, the British forces invaded Benin City, Nigeria and seized thousands of artifacts in the kingdom including bronze plaques, statues, ceremonial objects such as beads, anklets, crown, stool and spoil staff of office etc. These objects were taken as spoils of war and later sold to different museums and private collectors in Europe and beyond.

Current Restitution Status

Germany has formally committed to returning hundreds of Benin bronzes, with the Humboldt Forum in Berlin playing a leading role in this restitution process. Ownership of many pieces has already been transferred to Nigeria, marking a significant step in correcting the injustices of the 1897 looting.

University of Aberdeen's return: The University of Aberdeen in Scotland returned the sculpture of Oba of Benin in the year 2012, and they acknowledge that the acquisition of the work (Oba Portraits) was forbidden by their custom. (**CONFIRM THE CERTAINTY OF THIS STATEMENT**)

The British Museum continues to hold one of the largest collections of Benin bronzes, but it has refused to return them, drawing widespread criticism. The debate over their repatriation remains ongoing, with mounting pressure from Nigeria and the international community.

Challenges and progress

The repatriation efforts are driven by activists, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and cultural institutions. There are legal and logistical challenges, some museums are resisting restitution, citing laws that govern the disposal of objects in their collection.

New Home for the Benin Bronzes Repatriated – Nigeria government is setting up museums to house the returned artefacts, including the Royal Benin MUSEUM and the Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA). These institutions will undoubtedly provide a safe and culturally relevant environment for the Benin bronzes, ensuring their preservation for future generations. In this light, the return of the Benin bronzes is profoundly significant for Nigeria and, in particular, the people of Benin (Edo). It represents not only a step toward cultural healing but also a recognition of the dignity and heritage of the Nigerian nation and the Edo people within the global community.

Sociological, Economic, Political and Artistic implication of the return of the Benin art works by the Europeans.

The return of Benin art work by European has far reaching implications across various sub heading:

Sociological Implication

Cultural healing and Identity – The return of the Benin bronzes is a step towards cultural healing and recognition for the Edo people, allowing them to reclaim their heritage and restore dignity.

Community Empowerment – The repatriation efforts have empowered local communities to take control of their cultural narrative and historical legacy.

Global Cultural Exchange – The return facilitates international collaboration and dialogue, promoting cross cultural understanding and respect.

Economic Implications

Cultural Tourism -The return of the artefacts has boosted cultural tourism, generating revenue and promoting economic development in the region concerned.

Art market Impact

The repatriation of Benin bronzes has influenced the global art market, thereby potentially affecting the value and trade of similar African art pieces.

Investment in Cultural Infrastructure

The construction of museums like the Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA) demonstrates investment in cultural infrastructure creating opportunities for local artists and artisans.

Political Implication

Decolonization and Restitution – the returns reflect a shift towards decolonization, acknowledging historical injustices and promoting restitution as a means of redress.

International Cooperation

Repatriation effort involve government-to-government cooperation fostering diplomatic relations and cultural exchange.

Policy Reforms – The returns may prompt policy reforms in museums and cultural institutions, prioritizing transparency, accountability, and cultural sensitivity.

Artist Implication

Artist Heritage Preservation – The return of Benin bronzes ensures the preservation of artist heritage, allowing future generations to appreciate and learn from these masterpieces.

Inspiration and Creativity

The bronzes serve as a source of inspiration for artists, influencing contemporary art and promoting cultural continuity global Appreciation

The returns of the art pieces have highlighted the significance of African art, promoting global appreciation and recognition of its value and importance.

Cultural Implications of the Returns

The returns of the Benin bronzes has profound cultural implications, symbolizing a significant step towards cultural healing recognition and restoration of dignity for the Edo people. These artefacts are deeply connected to the identity, history and spiritual beliefs of the Edo community and their return helps restore a sense of justice and pride.

1. Reclaiming Heritage – the Benin bronzes are a vital part of Edo cultural heritage, representing a link to the kingdom's traditions of craftsmanship, government and artistic achievement.
2. Cultural Revival – The return of these artefacts revitalizes cultures suppressed or displaced by colonialism, providing a direct link to lost tradition and histories.
3. Educational Opportunities the restitution after a unique chance to integrate the artefacts into Nigeria's educational fabric, allowing schools and universities to study and reinterpret African history.

Social Implication of the Return of the Benin Bronze Works by the Europeans

1. It shows the superiority of the Benin bronze works over that of the Europeans.
2. It is an act of stealing that has been established and documented all over the globe.

The Europeans have utilized the looting as an avenue to copy the styles, medium and techniques of the Benin bronze works production. It is on record that through this means, African style and techniques of art production infiltrated into European art. It also shows the superiority of the bronze medium over the Europeans.

The act has reduced the acclaimed superiority of the western world art over the Black race (Benin kingdom) the Edo people in the sub-Sahara Africa region.

This has reduced the European reputation worldwide.

Findings

The repatriation of Benin bronzes has gained momentum globally, with several countries returning looted artifacts to Nigeria. Countries like Germany has returned over 1000 Benin bronzes. While Ireland, Scotland, and the United States have also returned individual art pieces. Netherland recently returned 119 Benin bronze works to Nigeria.

The return of the Benin bronze is a significant step towards cultural restitution, healing historical wounds and restoring cultural identity.

The museum has played a crucial role in the repatriation efforts together with some institutions like the University of Aberdeen and University of Cambridge setting precedence by returning the Benin bronze works.

Conclusion

The repatriation of the Benin bronzes underscores the urgent need for greater cooperation between museums, governments, and cultural institutions worldwide in addressing the enduring legacy of colonialism and cultural theft. Such collaboration is essential not only for the restitution of looted artefacts but also for fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual respect among nations. By returning these cultural treasures to their rightful custodians, the global community takes a significant step toward redressing historical injustices and promoting a more equitable framework for the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage.

The need for policy reforms should be strengthened, as existing laws and conventions governing repatriation—such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention—may require revision or expansion in order to effectively address the complexities of cultural restitution.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions, recommendations for future repatriation effects should include, the increase in international cooperation. This will make museums, government and cultural institutions to work together for a common goal to address the legacy of colonialism and cultural theft.

The support for repatriation by the governments and institutions should provide financial and logistical support for repatriation; including costs associated with transportation and preservation.

The paper also recommends the continued support for the communities' involvement in the repatriation processes as they are also stake holder in the business.

The existing laws and policies governing repatriation should be sustained and if possible, be expanded to address the complexities in cultural restitution to provide clearer guidelines for repatriation efforts initiated without stress.

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- Coombes, A.E. (1994). *Reinventing African Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England.* Yale University Press.

Online Resources.

Various news articles and reports from reputable sources like BBC News, The Guardian Newspaper and Al Jazeera

Institutional Sources

- The British museum
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- National Museum of African Art

Government Reports

Official statements and reports from governments involved in repatriation efforts, such as the Nigerian government or the German government

Other Sources

- Interviews and lectures
- Quotes or insight from experts, curators or community members involved in repatriation efforts.

Primary Sources

Historical documents, letters or other archival material related to the Benin bronze and their acquisition by European museums.

KEY:

The highlighted portions represent the reviewer's corrections compared to the author's original copy.

COMMENT

Your paper introduces an important topic and provides a clear overview. However, *I noticed that your paper states the University of Aberdeen returned the sculpture of the Oba of Benin in 2012. However, the correct year is 2021. The university acknowledged that its acquisition of the piece in 1957 was "extremely immoral" and became the first UK institution to unconditionally repatriate a Benin bronze.* I recommend updating this section to reflect the accurate date and context so the paper remains historically precise.

Your paper would benefit from reducing the repetition of similar sentences and improving punctuation use. Streamlining your phrasing and applying consistent punctuation will make your arguments clearer and more persuasive.

DIALOGIC MODERNISM: YORUBA SPIRITUALITY AND THE BLUE AESTHETIC IN YUSUF GRILLO AND PABLO PICASSO

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Abstract

This article examines the chromatic and epistemological significance of the colour blue in the works of Pablo Picasso and Yusuf Grillo, arguing for a dialogic rather than Eurocentric understanding of modernism. While Picasso's Blue Period reflects existential alienation and a universalizing modernist ethos, Grillo reconfigures blue through Yoruba concepts of *tùtù* (coolness) and *àṣẹ* (spiritual potency), embedding chromatic symbolism within an indigenous cosmological framework. Drawing on visual semiotics and decolonial aesthetics, this study undertakes a comparative iconographic and stylistic analysis of selected works, including Picasso's *The Old Guitarist* and Grillo's *Blue Women series*. It demonstrates how Grillo indigenizes modernist form through the philosophy of Natural Synthesis, thereby challenging Picasso's appropriationist model of innovation. The paper advances the notion of "dialogic modernism" as an interpretive framework, foregrounding Africa's intellectual and aesthetic agency in shaping global art histories. By repositioning Grillo alongside Picasso, this study redefines modernism as a polycentric constellation of aesthetic philosophies rather than a unilinear Eurocentric narrative.

Keywords: Dialogic Modernism; Yoruba Aesthetics; Decoloniality; Picasso; Yusuf Grillo; Blue Aesthetic

1. Introduction

The colour blue has carried profound symbolic resonance across global art traditions, from Byzantine spirituality to Islamic architecture and European modernism. In the twentieth century, Pablo Picasso's Blue Period (1901–1904) became emblematic of modernist melancholia, translating the hue into a visual register of existential alienation and fragility (Cooper, 1994; Richardson, 1991). At roughly the same historical moment of modernism's global expansion, Nigerian artist Yusuf Grillo reimagined the same hue through Yoruba metaphysical concepts of

tùtù (coolness) and *àṣẹ* (vital spiritual force), imbuing his Blue Women series with dignity, composure, and spiritual equilibrium (Drewal, 1989; Oloidi, 2003).

Scholarly attention has long framed Picasso's modernism in terms of innovation achieved through the appropriation of non-Western forms (Rubin, 1984; Blier, 2019). Conversely, African modernists such as Grillo are often treated as regional figures rather than as interlocutors in global debates on form and philosophy (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbechie, 2008). This imbalance reflects a broader Eurocentric bias in art history, where Africa appears primarily as a source of influence rather than a site of theoretical production.

This article seeks to redress this imbalance by comparatively examining Picasso's and Grillo's uses of blue as chromatic and epistemological devices. It asks: How does Grillo's Yoruba-inflected modernism challenge Picasso's universalist appropriation, and what does this reveal about the nature of global modernism? To address this question, the article adopts a comparative visual analysis framed within visual semiotics and decolonial aesthetics.

The argument advanced is twofold: first, that Picasso's engagement with blue exemplifies a monologic model of modernism rooted in appropriation; second, that Grillo's reinterpretation of blue embodies a dialogic modernism—one that integrates Yoruba cosmology with modernist form, thereby repositioning African aesthetics as central to global art history. By foregrounding Grillo's contribution, this study proposes dialogic modernism as an interpretive framework for rethinking modernism as a polycentric rather than unilinear narrative.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on modernism has historically privileged European narratives, situating artists such as Pablo Picasso at the centre of innovation while relegating African traditions to the margins. The discourse around Picasso's *Blue Period* and subsequent Cubist experiments frequently highlights his engagement with "the primitive" and African sources (Rubin, 1984). Foster (1985) critiques this dynamic as the "primitive unconscious of modern art," wherein African forms serve as catalysts for European creativity without acknowledgement of their originating epistemologies. Recent reappraisals emphasize that Picasso's engagement with African objects must be read within

a longer history of “primitivism,” a contested category that continues to require critical re-theorization (Visonà, 2020; Etherington & Spinner, 2024).

In contrast, studies of African modernism emphasise the ways artists negotiated colonial legacies while forging new visual languages. Grillo, a key member of the Zaria Art Society, emerges within scholarship on *Natural Synthesis*—the integration of indigenous African traditions with Western artistic techniques (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbechie, 2008). Comparative scholarship on Nsukka and other Nigerian schools demonstrates parallel translational strategies across African modernisms that reposition indigenized formalisms as theoretical interventions (Onibere & Egonwa, 2024; Translational Acts, 2025). Drewal (1989) and Fosu (1986) situate Yoruba visual philosophy, particularly concepts such as *tùtù* (coolness) and *àṣẹ* (spiritual authority), as central to the spiritual and aesthetic orientation of Nigerian modernism. However, Grillo’s chromatic and formal strategies remain underexamined in comparative art historical discourse.

Decolonial scholars such as Mignolo (2011) and Mercer (2005) argue for recognising “multiple modernities” and challenging Eurocentric art historical narratives. Edewor (2014) also indulged the same narrative while exploring Gani Odutokun’s “Dialogue with Mona Lisa” as import of the interface of Western and African contexts. Their frameworks illuminate how African modernists like Grillo should not merely be seen as derivative of European models but as interlocutors shaping global modernism in dialogic terms. This comparative study contributes to that emerging discourse by juxtaposing Picasso and Grillo as co-constructors of modernism rather than as innovator and follower, thereby addressing a critical gap in the literature.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theoretical Framing

This study adopts a comparative visual and iconographic analysis to examine how Picasso and Grillo mobilize the colour blue and female figuration within their respective cultural contexts. Visual semiotics provides the interpretive foundation, enabling close reading of compositional elements, chromatic choices, and figural symbolism as carriers of cultural and philosophical meaning.

The analysis is framed by decolonial aesthetics, particularly the call to foreground non-Western epistemologies as autonomous frameworks rather than supplementary to Western modernism (Mignolo, 2011). Yoruba cosmological concepts of *tùtù* and *àṣẹ* are employed not merely as cultural background but as analytical categories that shape the interpretation of Grillo's oeuvre. A decolonial aesthetic approach allows the analysis to treat Yoruba cosmologies as epistemic resources rather than background context (Oliveira, 2023). This theoretical choice aligns with scholarship that insists on the epistemic agency of African thought systems within global discourses (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbechie, 2008).

3.2 Method

The methodological approach proceeds in three steps:

1. **Case Selection:** Key works from Picasso's Blue Period (e.g., *The Old Guitarist*, 1903–04) and Grillo's Blue Women series (e.g., *Mother and Child*, *Woman in Blue*) are chosen for their chromatic and thematic resonance.
2. **Iconographic and Stylistic Comparison:** Each work is analysed in terms of colour symbolism, figural construction, and formal synthesis, highlighting points of convergence and divergence.
3. **Epistemological Interpretation:** The findings are interpreted through the lens of dialogic modernism, contrasting Picasso's Universalist appropriation with Grillo's indigenized formalism rooted in Yoruba spirituality.

This approach allows the study to move beyond aesthetic description toward a critical reassessment of modernism as a dialogic and polycentric phenomenon, thereby repositioning African modernism within global art history. Recent work on settler aesthetics and visual politics underscores how canons and display logics reproduce colonial erasures, strengthening the case for a dialogic reframing of modernism (Malot, 2024).

4. Comparative Framework: Picasso vs. Grillo

To clarify the epistemological and aesthetic distinctions between Picasso and Grillo, Table 1 provides a comparative framework highlighting their chromatic philosophies, figural strategies, and cultural motivations.

Dimension	Pablo Picasso	Yusuf Grillo	Interpretive Implication
Chromatic Philosophy (Blue)	Expresses melancholy, grief, alienation; Blue Period linked to existential despair (Cooper, 1994; Richardson, 1991).	Embodies tūtù (coolness, serenity) and àṣẹ (spiritual potency), conveying moral balance and sacred energy (Drewal, 1989; Fosu, 1986).	Blue as existential void vs. spiritual equilibrium — two epistemic registers.
Figural Representation (Women)	Female figures often depicted as fragile, spectral, or abstracted for formal experimentation (Green, 1987).	Women dignified, maternal, spiritual vessels; echo Yoruba ideals of fertility, resilience, and communal harmony (Oloidi, 2003).	Women as universalised vulnerability vs. culturally rooted dignity.

<p>Formal Strategy</p>	<p>Cubist abstraction, appropriation of African masks/forms; emphasis on universal innovation (Rubin, 1984; Blier, 2019).</p>	<p>Natural Synthesis: blending Cubist geometry with Yoruba aesthetics; indigenised modernism (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbechie, 2008).</p>	<p>Appropriation vs. Indigenisation.</p>
<p>Cultural Orientation</p>	<p>Universalist modernism—positions art as detached from specific cultural frameworks.</p>	<p>Dialogic modernism—art embedded in Yoruba ontology and cosmology.</p>	<p>Monologic universalism vs. polycentric dialogue.</p>
<p>Motivations/Philosophy</p>	<p>Innovation through cultural borrowing; Africa as “inspiration” but stripped of context.</p>	<p>Cultural reclamation and decolonial agency; Yoruba spirituality as epistemic framework.</p>	<p>Colonial gaze vs. Decolonial reclamation.</p>
<p>Modernist Positioning</p>	<p>Icon of European modernism; canonised globally.</p>	<p>African modernist interlocutor; often underrepresented in global canon.</p>	<p>Need to reposition Grillo as co-architect of modernism.</p>

5. Analysis

5.1 Chromatic Symbolism: Blue as a Visual Language

The colour blue occupies radically different epistemic registers in Picasso's and Grillo's oeuvres. For Picasso, the Blue Period (1901–1904) translated personal grief into a chromatic metaphor for universal despair. Works such as *The Old Guitarist* (1903–1904, Figure 1) embody spectral fragility, where monochromatic tonality amplifies the alienation of the solitary figure (Cooper, 1994). Blue thus functions as a signifier of existential void, detached from any culturally specific ontology.

Grillo, conversely, mobilises blue as a vessel of Yoruba metaphysics. In his *Blue Women series*, the hue does not connote emptiness but *tùtù*—a state of composure, serenity, and moral balance—and *àṣẹ*, the spiritual potency that imbues figures with sacred vitality (Drewal, 1989; Fosu, 1986). Rather than melancholy, Grillo's chromatic strategy projects dignity and contemplative depth, exemplified in works such as *Mother and Child* (Figure 2).

Placed side by side, these chromatic codes illustrate what this article terms the **epistemic split in modernism**: Picasso's universalised melancholy versus Grillo's culturally rooted spirituality. Where the European artist abstracts emotion into a global sign, the Nigerian artist embeds colour in Yoruba ontology.



Figure 1. Pablo Picasso, *The Old Guitarist*, 1903–1904, oil on panel, 122.9 × 82.6 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection. Retrieved from <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/28067/the-old-guitarist>



Figure 2. Yusuf Grillo, *Mother and Child*, n.d., oil on board, 81.5 × 61.7 cm. Sotheby’s Modern & Contemporary African Art Auction, Lot 9. Retrieved from <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/modern-contemporary-african-art-119220/lot.9.html>

5.2 Stylized Figuration: Women as Vessels of Meaning

Picasso’s women, particularly in the Blue Period and Cubist compositions, oscillate between fragile subjects of empathy and formal devices for compositional experimentation. In *La Vie* (1903) and later Cubist portraits and *Crouching Begger* (Plate 4), female bodies often signify vulnerability or function as geometric scaffolding for abstraction (Green, 1987). Their individuality is suppressed in favour of universalized expression or formal innovation.

By contrast, Grillo’s female figures—*Mother and Child* (Figure 2) and *Woman in Blue* (Figure 3)—are elevated as bearers of cultural memory and spiritual resilience. Their elongated forms, serene expressions, and luminous chromatic surfaces echo Yoruba sculptural conventions, where women symbolize fertility, continuity, and spiritual authority (Oloidi, 2003; Onibere & Ottuh,

2024). In these works, women are not anonymous forms but cultural signifiers of Yoruba cosmology.

This divergence underscores the dialogic potential of figural representation: Picasso instrumentalises women as *forms of fragility*, while Grillo dignifies them as *embodied vessels of Yoruba identity*.



Figure 3. Yusuf Grillo, *Woman in Blue*,

n.d., \ oil on board, ca. 90 × 60 cm.

Provenance via Sotheby’s auction archive.

Retrieved from <https://www.sothebys.com/>

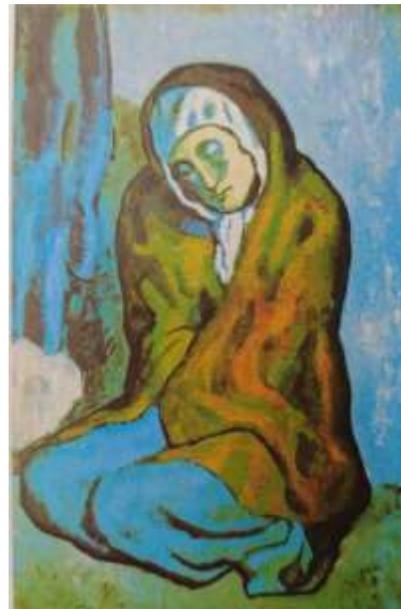


Figure 4. *Crouching Begger*, Misereue

Accroupie Barcelona, 1902 oil on canvass,

101.2 X 66 cm. Zervos I, 121; DB VII, 5; Palau 726 Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario.

5.3 Formal Synthesis and Decolonial Aesthetics

Picasso’s appropriation of African masks and Iberian sculpture catalyzed Cubism but stripped these forms of their indigenous symbolic contexts (Rubin, 1984; Blier, 2019). His modernism, though revolutionary, epitomizes what Foster (1985) called the “primitive unconscious of modern art”—a strategy of cultural borrowing that universalizes through erasure.

Grillo, in contrast, operationalizes Cubist geometry as part of the Zaria Art Society’s philosophy of *Natural Synthesis*. This doctrine sought to integrate Western forms with indigenous Nigerian

traditions as a decolonial strategy (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbachie, 2008). In Grillo's *Woman in Blue* (Figure 3), fractured planes and stylized geometry echo Cubist form, but their logic is redirected toward Yoruba aesthetics of balance, repetition, and rhythm.

Thus, Picasso's formalism demonstrates appropriation without context, while Grillo's exemplifies indigenization as reclamation. This distinction reframes African modernism as not derivative but epistemically autonomous.

5.4 Cultural Motivations and Aesthetic Philosophies

Picasso's philosophy of art foregrounded universality and innovation. His borrowing from African forms was not motivated by an interest in African cosmologies but by a desire to transcend tradition and reinvent pictorial form. Africa served as "raw material" for European modernism—its ritual potency erased in favour of abstraction (Rubin, 1984).

Grillo, by contrast, situates art within Yoruba cosmology. His works such as *Eyo* (Figure 5) and *Blue Head* (Figure 6) explicitly reference Yoruba ritual, spirituality, and communal philosophy. For Grillo, formal innovation is inseparable from cultural responsibility—the artist is a custodian of heritage as much as a modern innovator.

Here the divergence is stark: Picasso advances a modernism of universalist rupture, whereas Grillo advances a modernism of dialogic reclamation, reinserting Yoruba metaphysics into the language of global art.



Figure 5. Yusuf Grillo, *Eyo*, 1993, oil on board, 111 × 87 cm. Sotheby’s Modern & Contemporary African Art Auction.



Figure 6. Yusuf Grillo, *Blue Head*, ca. 1960s, oil on board. Auction provenance via Mutual Art, entry “Head, 1966.” Retrieved from <https://www.mutualart.com/>

5.5 Toward a Dialogic Modernism

The foregoing comparisons reveal two distinct trajectories within modernism. Picasso represents a monologic narrative of modernism—innovation achieved through appropriation, presented as universal. Grillo, conversely, embodies a dialogic modernism—a mode in which modernist form is mediated through Yoruba spirituality and cultural philosophy, producing a polycentric rather than unilinear art history.

Dialogic modernism thus recognizes that modernism was not exclusively authored in Europe but co-constructed across cultural frontiers. By juxtaposing Picasso and Grillo, this article argues for repositioning African modernists not as peripheral imitators but as epistemic interlocutors in global modernism. In Grillo’s hands, blue is no longer the colour of absence but of presence, dignity, and spiritual depth—an aesthetic and philosophical counter-narrative to Eurocentric modernism.

6. Conclusion

This comparative study has examined the divergent yet intersecting trajectories of Pablo Picasso and Yusuf Grillo, focusing on their use of the colour blue and figural representation. While Picasso's *Blue Period* translates personal grief into a universalist register of melancholy and alienation, Grillo's *Blue Women* series reconfigures blue as a chromatic embodiment of Yoruba spirituality, affirming *tùtù* (coolness) and *àṣẹ* (spiritual potency). These chromatic strategies reveal two epistemic orientations: Picasso's monologic universalism, grounded in appropriation, and Grillo's dialogic modernism, rooted in cultural reclamation and ontological depth.

The contrast extends beyond colour. Picasso's women, fragile and spectral, reflect existential vulnerability or serve as scaffolds for Cubist abstraction. Grillo's women, by contrast, embody dignity, fertility, and communal resilience, resonating with Yoruba aesthetic philosophy. Similarly, Picasso's formal innovations emerge from the erasure of African spiritual contexts, whereas Grillo's geometry exemplifies *Natural Synthesis*—an indigenization of modernist form that anchors abstraction within Yoruba cosmology.

Together, these divergences advance the argument that global modernism cannot be understood as a unilinear narrative emanating from Europe. Instead, modernism is better conceptualized as dialogic, forged through intercultural exchange and sustained by polycentric epistemologies. By repositioning Grillo alongside Picasso, this article affirms Africa's active role in shaping modernism—not as a peripheral source of inspiration but as a site of theoretical and aesthetic production.

The implications are twofold. First, the framework of dialogic modernism invites a rewriting of art history curricula to foreground African and other non-Western modernisms as co-architects of global modernity. Second, it underscores the need for further comparative studies that place African artists in conversation not only with European counterparts but also with Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern modernists. Such scholarship will deepen our understanding of modernism as a truly global and entangled phenomenon.

Ultimately, Grillo's chromatic philosophy dismantles the melancholic universality of Picasso's blue and reclaims it as a colour of presence, dignity, and spiritual depth. In doing so, his oeuvre

asserts that modernism's history is incomplete without recognizing the epistemic and aesthetic agency of Africa.

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RETHINKING THE SKULL: FROM RITUAL SYMBOLISM TO SCULPTURAL MATERIALITY IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

By

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Abstract

This study examines how animal skulls especially the cow skull that have long been associated with rituals, taboo, and fear can be reimagined as media for contemporary sculpture. Adopting a practice-based approach, the paper was organised in two phases: pre-studio activities, involving the collection, maceration, cleaning, and preparation of the cow skulls and individual parts of the skulls and studio activities, where assemblage, engraving, slicing/cutting, drilling, sandpapering and finishing techniques were employed. Three works out of the five works that were produced as follows- *Environmental Hazard*, *Termite Anthill while Awon Amuludun*, *Things Fall Apart*, and *Motherhood Passion* were analysed. These works demonstrate that, when transformed through careful processes, bones shed their connotations of fear and sacredness thereby becoming vehicles for new meanings. They articulate themes of cultural resilience, ecological awareness, and conceptual hybridity, while addressing the potential of up-cycling as a sustainable artistic strategy. By engaging with both traditional symbolism and contemporary experimentation, the study challenges entrenched perceptions of the skull and positions it as a potent material for innovation. The findings contribute to discussions on materiality, postcolonial identity, and creative resourcefulness in contemporary African art.

Keywords: Bone sculpture; Contemporary African art; Unconventional Materiality; Up-cycling; Ritual symbolism; Maceration

Introduction

During a visit to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Benin (Ekehuan Campus), one of the authors of this paper recalls an experience that shaped his early perception of the skull as a cultural object. Passing the Department of Theatre Arts during an induction ceremony, he encountered students in symbolic costumes of red, white, and black, with painted faces and palm

fronds, moving solemnly and rhythmically around a decorated white cow skull. At first, the scene evoked fear and raised questions of ritual or occult practice, but it was later understood as a theatrical performance celebrating African performance aesthetics.

This encounter prompted reflection on the persistent association of skulls with ritual, occultism, and fear in African societies. The skull whether human or animal has historically symbolized ancestral presence, spiritual potency, and communal memory (Jegede, 1991; Oloidi, 2010). Such meanings, though culturally significant, have reinforced its taboo status and limited its artistic exploration. This paper seeks to reframe these narratives by presenting the skull as an object of beauty, innovation, and aesthetic significance in contemporary sculpture. Using cow skulls as unconventional media, the study highlights their symbolic, environmental, and material value, in line with scholarship encouraging African artists to extend cultural materials into new expressive domains (Egonwa, 2012; Onipede, 2017).

The study employs a studio-based methodology structured into two phases: pre-studio and studio activities. The pre-studio stage involved sourcing, cleaning, and preserving bones, while the studio phase emphasized design, assemblage, engraving, and finishing. Through these processes, cow skulls were transformed into viable sculptural materials that challenge ritualistic taboos. By repositioning the skull as a medium of innovation and environmental consciousness, this study contributes to discourses on materiality in African sculpture and demonstrates its potential for new aesthetic and conceptual possibilities.

Literature Review

(a) . Animal and Human Skulls An Overview

The skull is a fundamental structure in vertebrates, serving to protect the brain and support feeding and sensory functions. Composed of multiple bones, it provides critical insights into evolutionary history, functional adaptation, and cultural symbolism.

The human skull consists of 22 bones, divided into cranial bones that encase the brain and facial bones that form the face and jaws (Standring, 2016). Its enlarged cranial vault, flat facial profile, and reduced jaws distinguish it from other primates, reflecting evolutionary adaptations for increased brain size, upright posture, and speech (Lieberman, 2011). Human skulls also exhibit

variations across sex, age, and ancestry, which makes them central to anthropology, medicine, and forensics (White et al., 2012).

By contrast, animal skulls demonstrate broader morphological diversity, shaped by diet and ecological niche. The cow skull, for instance, exemplifies herbivorous adaptation: it features a broad frontal bone, elongated nasal cavity for heightened smell, prominent orbits for wide vision, and a mandible with flat molars specialized for grinding vegetation (Kardong, 2019). Cows lack upper incisors, instead using a tough dental pad in conjunction with lower incisors for food processing. The parietal and temporal bones enclose the brain, while the occipital bone links the skull to the vertebral column, providing stability during grazing (Hall, 2015).

Comparatively, the human skull emphasizes cranial capacity and cognitive function, whereas the animal skull emphasizes feeding and environmental specialization. Beyond their biological functions, skulls also carry deep cultural significance, frequently associated with ritual, symbolism, and art across societies (Hutson, 2010).

In this study, the anatomical parts of the cow skull including the cranium, eye sockets, nasal cavity, jawbones, and teeth are examined not solely as biological structures but as artistic resources. As a sculptor, the goal is to repurpose the skull beyond its traditional associations with ritual and symbolism, repositioning it as a medium of creative expression. This approach situates the cow skull within contemporary sculptural discourse, where natural forms and organic material are transformed to challenge cultural perceptions and extend the material possibilities of art practice.

(b). Unconventional Materials in Contemporary Sculpture

Contemporary sculpture has moved beyond the confines of traditional media such as stone, wood, clay, and metal to embracing unconventional materials that expand the vocabulary of form and meaning. The 20th century witnessed significant shifts as Dadaism, Surrealism, Pop Art, and Arte Povera that challenged material hierarchies thereby elevating found objects, industrial wastes, and organic matter as legitimate sculptural media (Chilvers, 2009). This openness to non-traditional resources has become a defining feature of global and African art, with artists like Sokari Douglas Camp and El Anatsui blending indigenous and industrial elements to explore new visual languages

(Jegade, 1991; Egonwa, 2012). In this context, unconventional materials become active agents of meaning rather than neutral supports.

(c). Up-cycling as a Creative Approach in Sculpture

Up-cycling, though modern in origin, refers to the transformation of waste materials into artworks of heightened aesthetic and symbolic value (McDonough & Braungart, 2002). Unlike recycling, which breaks materials down, up-cycling preserves their integrity, enhancing both function and meaning. McDonough and Braungart (2002) note that it “maintains the material’s integrity and value while elevating its purpose and appeal in new contexts.” In contemporary art, this approach extends beyond repurposing to convey ecological and conceptual significance (Sung et al., 2014).

As a sculptural methodology, up-cycling redefines waste as a site of innovation. Nnorom (2021) describes this as “creative resourcefulness,” where the histories of materials scratches, erosion, or logos become narrative elements. Spaid (2017) similarly emphasizes the role of ecological art in transforming discarded matter into cultural texts. Prominent examples include El Anatsui’s monumental bottle-cap tapestries (Oguibe, 1999; Goldstein, 2024), Vik Muniz’s landfill portraits in *Waste Land* (Simon, 2010; Architecture Digest, 2016), and Tony Cragg’s plastic assemblages that blur boundaries between the natural and industrial (Cragg, 1993; Sculpture Magazine, 2010).

(d). Symbolism and Materiality in Contemporary Sculpture

In contemporary sculpture, symbolism resides not only in form but in the cultural and historical resonance of materials themselves (Egonwa, 2012). Antliff and Leighten (2019) stress that media can communicate political and cultural meanings even before formal interpretation.

Artists such as Ai Weiwei, Anish Kapoor, and El Anatsui exemplify this material-symbolic dialogue. Weiwei’s use of reclaimed wood, porcelain, and bicycles challenges narratives of heritage and censorship (Smith, 2020). Kapoor’s reflective stainless steel and wax installations interrogate spirituality and perception (Moffett, 2013). El Anatsui’s monumental bottle-cap tapestries transform waste into commentaries on colonialism and global trade (Oguibe, 1999; Goldstein, 2024).

Methodology

This study employed a studio-based, practice-led research design (Gray & Malins, 2004; Sullivan, 2005). The process was structured into two phases: pre-studio activities and studio practice. As Oloidi (2010) notes, the pre-studio stage involves conceptualization and preparation of materials, while the studio phase emphasizes practical exploration and production.

A studio-based approach was considered most appropriate because the research sought not only to theorize but also to demonstrate, through practice, how skulls could be reimagined beyond their ritual and taboo associations. By integrating material preparation with experimental studio processes, the study ensured that both technical execution and conceptual framing directly informed the creative outcomes.

Pre-Studio Activities

The pre-studio phase involved ideation, selection of cow skulls and parts, and maceration processes. Maceration which is the cleaning and preservation of bones was crucial for transforming raw skulls into workable materials. It entails removing soft tissues without damaging the bone structure, thereby preparing them for creative application (Christian et al., 2021).

The boiling method was adopted, following Claire (2017), for its efficiency in artistic contexts. The process combined natural decomposition, boiling, and chemical treatments. Fresh skulls from the abattoir were first stored for partial decomposition, then boiled to loosen tissues, sterilize, and degrease, with detergent added to neutralize odour. Residual ligaments were manually removed, after which the skulls were scrubbed, rinsed, and treated with mild hydrogen peroxide to sanitize and preserve coloration (Savitri et al., 2023). A final ethanol rinse accelerated drying and disinfection before the bones were air-dried in a ventilated space.

This systematic preparation rendered the skulls safe, durable, and odour-free, ready for studio experimentation. Symbolically, the process also cleansed the material of ritual and taboo associations, repositioning it as a viable medium for contemporary sculptural production.

Studio Production Processes

The studio production process involved the modeling techniques adopted in the study, which include carving of the cow skulls through slicing/cutting, engraving, drilling, sandpapering, and assemblage.

Materials and Tools Used During the Study

The combination of materials, tools, and equipment supported both the technical manipulation of the bone medium and the conceptual aims and objectives of the study. Each action involving collecting, cleaning, cutting, and assembling was treated as a symbolic act of transformation, redefining the skull from an object of fear into a medium of resilience and innovation within contemporary African sculpture. Cow skull bones formed the core material, while detergent, hydrogen peroxide, ethanol, and water were used for cleaning and whitening. Firewood and large pots enabled boiling, and Araldite gum, binding wire, metal rods, as well as bolts and nuts were applied to stabilize the components during assemblage.

Both manual and power tools were utilized. Power tools included an arc welder, grinding and drilling machines, and a cordless drill, paired with accessories such as cutting discs, hole saws, and drill bits for slicing, shaping, engraving, and perforating bone surfaces. Manual tools were reserved for fine finishing and precision tasks where mechanical tools were unsuitable.

Figure 1



Title: Awon Amuludun (The Entertainers)

Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi

Medium: Cow Lower Jaw Bone (Mandible)

Size: 36 x10 x11cm

Year of production: 2024

Description and Analysis

Awon Amuludun (translated as “The Entertainers”) is a bone sculpture in the round produced in 2024, measuring approximately 36 cm in height, 10 cm in breadth, and 11 cm in length. Sculpted entirely from cow mandibles (lower jawbones), the piece features three stylized standing figures: two male drummers and one female dancer carved, sliced, and finely sanded to achieve a smooth finish. The figures are mounted on a high black pedestal, which enhances their visual prominence and contrasts with the white bone surfaces, emphasizing their celebratory and entertainment essence.

The composition is arranged rhythmically: the dancer leads in front while the two drummers follow behind. Despite their simplified forms, the figures convey motion and communal energy, capturing

the vibrant atmosphere of cultural festivities. Traditionally, drumming and dancing play integral roles in communal entertainment and social cohesion. In contemporary society, however, entertainment has expanded beyond these traditional expressions to include sporting activities such as football, basketball, and swimming, as well as the global film industries (e.g., Nollywood, Hollywood, and Bollywood) and digital platforms like social media.

Symbolically, the work celebrates the enduring relevance of entertainment as a means of cultural expression and communal bonding. By transforming bone a material often associated with death into dynamic forms that embody vitality and rhythm, the artist creates a powerful paradox. The sculpture thus bridges tradition and modernity, reaffirming the role of art in sustaining cultural identity and collective joy in contemporary African contexts.

Figure 2



Title: Things Fall Apart
Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi
Medium: Bone
Size: 61cm x 122cm
Year of production: 2024

Description and Analysis

“Things Fall Apart” is a high-relief sculpture (Fig: 2) measuring approximately 61 cm by 122 cm, inspired by Chinua Achebe’s classic novel. The high-relief sculptural artwork reinterprets the novel’s central theme, the disintegration of Igbo society under colonial influence through form and material. Constructed primarily from cow skulls (cranium, jawbones (mandible and maxilla), teeth (premolars and molars), and other bone fragments, the sculpture represents a fabric-like surface that has been torn apart. This bone “fabric” is achieved by engraving and arranging flat sliced bones, while gaps and ruptures in the surface are created using sliced bone rings, symbolizing dent and disintegration created by the colonial imposition.

The most striking feature in the composition is the zipper element made from cow jawbones, teeth, and a skull fragment (cranium), positioned to unify the torn fabric but rendered dysfunctional. The zipper, fastened with bolts washers and nuts, contrasts sharply with the rest of the composition, which is joined organically with Araldite gum. This juxtaposition of industrial and organic bonding methods symbolizes the clash between indigenous cohesion and colonial imposition.

Through these symbolic gestures, the work visualizes the collapse of traditional structures. Bones here function as both literal material and metaphor, representing cultural memory, mortality, and the fragile bonds that colonial forces sought to manipulate. “Things Fall Apart” thus transforms a literary narrative into a sculptural meditation on identity, disruption, and resilience.

Figure 3



Title: Motherhood Passion
Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi
Medium: Camel and Cow Jaw Bone
Size: 46 cm × 26 cm × 17 cm.
Year of production: 2024

Description and Analysis

Motherhood Passion (Fig: 3), produced in 2024, is a freestanding sculpture in the round measuring approximately 46 cm × 26 cm × 17 cm. It was constructed from camel and cow bones primarily camel's lower jawbones with teeth and cow lower jawbones, some with and others without teeth combined with camel bone offcuts to enrich the tactile feeling of the surface. Executed in a representational style, the work explores themes of maternal love, care, and devotion.

The piece was developed through a direct modelling technique that retained the natural properties of the bones while reshaping their physical structure. The elements were assembled using slicing,

carving, and bonding with bolts, nuts, and Araldite adhesive to form a cohesive three-dimensional composition. A black-painted wooden base provides contrast to the bones' off-white tones and anchors the sculpture through a central screw fitting for stability.

Formally, the camel jawbone constitutes the dominant structure, symbolising the mother in a stylised seated posture. A smaller cow jawbone, positioned on her lap, represents the child, while additional sliced elements refine and support the composition. This spatial arrangement foregrounds intimacy, protection, and continuity. Conceptually, the work frames motherhood as the foundation of early leadership and emotional development. The maternal figure embodies empathy, guidance, and resilience, presenting nurturing as a model for societal values and leadership ideals. Through its material transformation, *Motherhood Passion* elevates discarded organic matter into a cultural metaphor for care and enduring strength.

Conclusion

This study repositions animal skulls and bones, materials traditionally associated with taboo, ritual, and fear as dynamic media for contemporary African sculpture. Through a systematic process that began with the maceration and preparation of bones and extended into careful studio experimentation, the research demonstrates how unconventional materials can acquire new symbolic, aesthetic, and cultural meanings.

The three studio works *Awon Amuludun*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Motherhood Passion* collectively highlight how bone, stripped of its former connotations, can be reinterpreted to express themes of joy, coexistence, leadership and cultural resilience. This transformation affirms that materiality itself can be a critical site of innovation, allowing African artists to challenge inherited perceptions, expand their sculptural vocabulary, and contribute to broader conversations on sustainability and cultural reinvention in contemporary art.

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YOUTHS AND CREATIVITY IN THE NEXT DECADE: ASABA AS A PARADIGM OF UNESCO CREATIVE CITY

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ABSTRACT

The real source of indigenous designs and motifs are our cultural practices. These cannot be extracted without a direct participation and connection with the rudiments of our ethnic expressions. The decline in the alignment of our present day youth from their roots is making this a frustrating venture. Motifs like the indigo dye lines, shapes and geometric forms, the popular western lizard and ethnic facial marks (ila), the uli lines and the nsibidi inscriptions were born out of a creative mingling with the indigenous dimensions that bore them. Hence in celebrating Asaba's inclusion to the UNESCO creative cities, a conscious effort is solicited from capable quarters to 'turn the hearts of the children to the fathers'. This will enable our intrinsic creative qualities to be extracted. Its great value can then be employed in a more competitive and qualitative expression of our uniqueness and creative competence, reflecting our indigenous signature on the global space.

KEY WORDS: Asaba, UNESCO, Youth, Indigenous, Creativity, Next Decade

Introduction

December of the year 2023 saw Asaba's designation as a UNESCO creative city!(Network, 2023). This was a very strategic event in the history of Asaba.



*Figure 2 Official image for Asaba As a UNESCO creative city - Film Category.
(Network, 2023)*

On 27th August, 1991 Delta State was carved out of the former Bendel and Rivers States of Nigeria. It used to be an integral part of the former Mid-Western Region and later the defunct Bendel State. Asaba is the capital city of the Delta State of Nigeria (NigeraGalleria, 2021). It lies strategically along the west bank of the famous River Niger, across the historic Niger Bridge from Onitsha. It is believed to have been founded by Nnebisi in the 19th century. It was once the colonial capital of southern Nigeria and a renowned trade centre that hosted the Royal Niger Company between 1886 – 1900 (Asaba, n.d.). The city which previously had nine quarters ‘Ahabaeboitenani’, made up of settlers from different places was believed to have been eventually founded on the basis of five quarters named after the five grandsons of Nnebisi, namely – Umuezei, Ugbomanta, Umuagu, Umuaji and Umuonaje (Association, n.d.). Asaba has grown steadily in various aspects as a state capital. She has particularly excelled herself in the indigenous film industry, the art on which its designation as a UNESCO city was based. A noble effort has been made in the indigenous film industry in Asaba and equivalent effort is required in complementary areas to ensure a well-rounded creative city and state for National impact.

The youths are an integral part of these efforts to preserve our tomorrow. Our tomorrow also needs to be preserved in a texture that will not make the future generation aliens to the roots that bore them. The indigenous character is the authentic link and identity between the future and the past. Indeed, today is the vital connection between yesterday and tomorrow. Establishing this link appears to be a herculean task, hence – bringing the youths to the table for the next decade.

Obviously, the table is set, the decade is ready to unfold, there are a handful of willing tools to do the bringing but where are our youths? It can be concluded that the table is the mood and circumstance of this present time we live, the decade is the next set of ten years and the BRINGERS are the honest adults who like UNESCO are watching out for willing players acting in the right direction. Those who the pains and joys of their yesteryears are deeply set in the burden of their tomorrow. The big question then is, ‘who are the youth’? Are they merely the young lads or ladies here and there, everywhere in Asaba? Are these young people around Asaba today really our youth, our offspring, our future and our hope?

Do they have the semblance of the things that make Asaba what she really is?

Do they smell the smoke from the rural fireplace? Do they know the taste of roasted oil palm nuts in hot ash? Can they identify the edible forage for our domestic livestock? How many proverbs

can they say much less interpret? Are they competent to start a fire for the evening meal with firewood or capable of going to the neighbour's fireplace to collect glowing embers to make theirs (*'igutaoku'*)? Is the taste of smoke in their meal an embarrassment or a nostalgic relish? Can we pass a sensitive message to them in a coded mother tongue as a safety measure and symbol of a root that can mark them to be spared?

This is not an insult to wearers of baggy drooping trousers or slangs from a language that is alien. It is not a disdain for greetings in a tongue that has no term for the elderly or a poise that clothe you in shame towards that which is the essence of who you are? Priding in the strange sickening declaration that, *'I don't understand Igbo'* or *'I have never been to my village?'*, meanwhile you are ready to kill to obtain a visa and *'japa'*. Shamefully denying or anglicising the rich and meaningful native name you were given for a guy-name that eventually means stone, serpent or absolutely nothing! Who do the owners of the cultural motions you embrace recognise you as? Are you worth anything to them? Our youth might just be getting ready to wake up to a sorry shock that they are just unpaid advertising agents, selling a forced product at the expense of their entire generation at a cheap non-refundable price!

Asaba, Delta and Nigeria youths need to wake up! As fitly put in the local parlance, *'Know thyself no be curse!'* Our youth are in a dangerous stupor and on the verge of losing what matters most to them and to every individual – their heritage. It's time to discover the rich origin and heritage you have, pride in it and sell it as your price and reward for greatness and untold creativity. This is a unique trophy for your act in the scene of life. You are greater than what you are borrowing and priding in. You are worth more than you are being offered, to sell or abandon your birth-right. You were meant to churn your own greatness from your source and origin. Don't demean it. Don't relegate it, don't resent it, don't disappoint it! It's a treasure hid in the bowels of your being.

According to the UNESCO cities network, these were the values Asaba added that qualified them to be designated a creative city:

As a Creative City of Film, Asaba is dedicated:

- To identify and nurture local creative talents, providing them with training opportunities and platforms to showcase their skills within the film industry;
- To foster collaboration and technical exchange within the film industry;
- To create opportunities for continuous growth and development of the creative sector, promoting innovation and expansion of culture; and
- To spread historical awareness and to provide cultural support, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of Asaba continues to be celebrated and shared.(Network, 2023)

ASABA AS A PARADIGM OF A UNESCO CREATIVE CITY

To identify and nurture local creative talents, providing them with training opportunities and platforms to showcase their skills within the film industry;

This is a laid down plan to bridge generational gaps by ensuring that creativity is groomed from the grassroots. It establishes and ensures that a connection between the past and the present is maintained. There must be a conscious effort to constantly reap and inculcate the indigenous values from identified flag-bearers to the up-coming generation to ensure that indigenes do not turn aliens in the long run. If the human resource deposits in this area are not harnessed they will be harvested by others and brain drain syndrome will apply. Consequently identifying these talents is one thing, grooming them with an adaptation to the unique style and signature they are meant to represent is another. The latter is a vital dimension because it is the ingredient that customises them with the vital indigenous flavour. When a mind is groomed with a healthy disposition to its roots, in the deep moments when creativity is sought and hunted for within, strategic ideas will not fail to well up. This repeats with a transitional ripple effect and every custodian pours into the persons that are being raised under them. This is how cultures are packaged for a systemic global impact

To foster collaboration and technical exchange within the film industry;

When the next man creating sees the others as partners in what he does, the will to work as a team builds up. Collaboration that will challenge towards improvement and excellence in creativity will be the result. Unhealthy competitions will cease and creativity with a common focus (to improve the things that bind us together) will be at the core. Teammates will no longer be the enemy but capacity enablers for a powerful national front that can contend in the global stage. Freedom to enhance by exchanging technical treasures will boost quality and overall outputs across the nation.

To create opportunities for continuous growth and development of the creative sector, promoting innovation and expansion of culture:

The whole essence of this move is to entrench continuity in growth. The positive results of collaborations and technical exchanges will call for a repeat and that will lay a foundation for continuity in growth and much needed development in creativity. This will trigger innovation and compel a cultural expansion beyond boundaries. When the basis for advancing is empowered by retreating, the past becomes a regular meeting spot for the treasure of the future. A constant glance at the past becomes a critical proven routine for engendering collaborations and instigating exchanges which will ensure continued growth and development of cultural innovation. As popularly said, 'a people without a past cannot boast of a future'. This is captured more aptly in this local adage, *'if you don't know where you are coming from how will you know where you are headed?'* or as creatively put in another similar version, *'if you don't know where the rain started wetting you, you cannot tell where it stopped as well'*. This particular value touches on the truth that two heads are better and would yield a better result than one. In this situation, effective collaboration and exchange must be based on the unique elements of the indigenous creativity. This is found no other place than in the past and will be enhanced by no other but the present vision bearers.

To spread historical awareness and to provide cultural support, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of Asaba continues to be celebrated and shared.

Any culture without the hope of continuity is heading for extinction. The modern instrument for continuity is documentation and records. Culture can be captured in creative expressions of art and

history, then stored for generations unborn to appreciate and learn from. You cannot become or identify with what you don't know or recognise no matter how prestigious it is. Quality value is created and preserved by documenting things that are authentically yours. These documented values are used for awareness and for affirmation. Flaunting it with a persuasive, confident and proud air identifies it on the cultural heritage scale. Its position on this scale improves over time until the culture becomes an authority in the genre it is known for. If Asaba was busy acting Indian and Chinese films they would not have done it better than Indians and the Chinese. They acted what was natural and indigenous to them and it threw them out on the UNESCO spotlight.

A cue can be taken from this template of what put Asaba on the UNESCO stage. The table is set, a modern and fresh example is laid down. How many youths are willing to discover the uniqueness of their roots and turn it to a custom-made instrument for taking over their world? If China, Japan, America and Germany are shamelessly making other nations bow to them though their uncompromising footprints enshrouded in cultural elements. Anyone else who dares to do likewise will certainly get the same attention and results.

Definition of Terms

Ila – Facial markings

Uli – Indigo dye

Nsibidi – Ancient Symbol based writing

Iguta Oku– Fetching fire

Japa – Oversea migration syndrome

Know thyself, no be curse - It is a noble thing to understand your capacity ahead

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PRACTICE-LED DOCTORATE ENQUIRY: THE PHILOSOPHICAL CURRENCY FOR ART SCHOLARSHIP IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper investigates knowledge in studio arts practice. The question is who creates it, who speaks it and who owns it? For a long time, dated back to Plato and Aristotle days, philosophers have always had superior attitude toward visual arts. Presently in Nigeria, inquiry in the Studio Arts in the academy is beset by a compelling argument that creative and cultural enquiry undertaken by artists is not necessary. This study opines that there is the need for practice-led enquiry; positioning it within the discourse of research. It thus advocates some fundamental reasons why visual artists who choose to be academic should embrace the studio Ph.D programmes in their respective genres. Some of which include: adding values by sharpening the hand, and eye as well as the mind and extends the artists range of creative expressions and possibilities; it qualifies the artist-scholar to teach theory, practice and philosophy; helps to create a new way of thinking and seeing among others. In order to create a uniform standard in practice led scholarship, this paper proposes the formation of a National University Commission (NUC) led curriculum drafters and monitors that will ensure high standard for Ph.D programmes for studio artists in Nigeria.

Keywords: Knowledge, practice, enquiry, philosophy, curriculum, standard, academy, scholarship

Introduction

In the past, within the milieu of studio art training, students traditionally found their way to the studios and classes of eminent artists, learning through the apprenticeship methods of watching, doing and instructing. Studio artists from time immemorial create their own credentials and are esteemed based on the quality and acceptance of their work, their influence on other artists and their frequency of exhibition and patronage. As a matter of fact, the nomenclature “Artist” as defined by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary is a person who creates works of art especially paintings or drawings (Hornby, 2010). What this means in essence is that anybody can be called an artist as long as traces of artistic, talent is inherent in such person with proof of practice. Also, it denotes anybody who trained under the instruction of a master artist and practices his skill. At this level of skill acquisition, this study agrees that no degree, diploma or certificate can confer value or importance to any work of art produced under this influence.

However, in the context of this paper, graduate art education is a total paradigm shift from the way the art and artists were perceived in the ancient days. It is no longer news that knowledge has been brought into the arts. In today's arts education, baccalaureate, diploma certificate, bachelor and master degrees in Fine art have become the union cards or leveler for artists since the second half of the 20th century. The curricula at these levels offer general education that includes fine and applied arts at the undergraduate level, and critical theory with studio practice in many other cases on the master's level. This position corroborates Cwobeel (2015) assertion which says:

Since World War II artist training has moved to elementary schools and contemporary art has become an increasingly academic and intellectual field. Prior to World War II an artist did not usually need a college degree. Since that time, the Bachelor of Fine Arts and then the Master of Fine Arts became recommended degrees to be a professional artist.

In a related development, Grant (2011) notes that over the past 50 years, the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree has been described as a terminal degree, which he says is the endpoint in an artist's formal academic and professional education. This abrupt end brought to the fore the notion that studio art was still limited in the areas of knowledge and philosophy, despite its entrance into the school system and its increasing academic and intellectual demands. In time past, philosophy has always been seen as the origin and oracle of knowledge and as self-proclaimed creator, speaker and owner of knowledge, philosophy assumes itself in charge of art. Corroborating the statement above Smith (2008), posits:

Anyhow, philosophy's superior attitude toward art goes back a long way. While Plato insists that truth of art is false, Aristotle allows that art is better than history, because its truth, its knowledge is closer to that of philosophy. Nevertheless, Aristotle's point remains: philosophy is higher than art because art's knowledge is less true. While Kant in 1800 famously grants the artist the title of genius, He is only too quick to assure his Enlightenment reader that the classical hierarchy of knowledge is still the order of things, precisely in so far as the mind of the scientist/philosopher is still to be viewed as superior to that of the artist.

As a matter of fact, William James in Smith (2008) postulates: centuries after the above theories by Plato, Aristotle and Kant in “The Principles of Psychology” debunked and throw away Kants fine proclamation that the artist is a “genius” and the scientist of “greater mind”. Instead, he took the title of “genius” away from the artist and hands it over to the scientists.

In the context of this paper and very much at the front burner of Art Education is knowledge. The questions raised by this study are who creates the knowledge; who speaks it and who owns it. Smith (2008) acknowledges the theory of deferred action which he notes is the key to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory otherwise known as the fundamental concept of Zizek’s philosophy. Zizek theory agrees that the artist has always been a philosopher. He opines that the reason or part of the reason why the artist has not been regarded as such is that she often does not know exactly what she is doing when she creates art, when she produces knowledge and when she creates philosophy. In a discourse Maharaj (2004) describes the creative process as “spasmic, interdisciplinary probes, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interaction and imaginary archiving. Maharaj is almost in agreement with Kant’s later withdrawn “genius” status for the artist. The difference is that Maharaj sees the artist’s creative process as a beautiful promise for the conception of knowledge; while Kant sees it as good reason to count artistic knowledge as less valuable, less credible, less useful and less pragmatic than the so-called scientific/philosophical knowledge.

Smith (2008) in Foucault and Lyotard et al observes that: the process of knowledge production is not a measure of bona fide knowledge; rather, bona fide knowledge the measure of legitimate philosophical inquiry, however and wherever it gets done – hypothetically or rhizomatically. And yet, because the process is different, the bona fide knowledge of the artist/philosopher is and will be different from that of the scientist/philosopher.

The position of the above statement according to Wilson (2008) in Slager is that the artist’s creative process not only produces fluent forms of knowledge production, but leads to novel artistic strategies and intensities of perception. In essence the scientific and artistic inquiry/philosophy are placed on the same pedestal of knowledge and these days has become more dialogical and less

dialectical. The onus therefore lies in the fact that the pre-knowledge of a creation of an art which is called the concept requires deep critical thinking. And this can only be giving birth to by the creator of such idea. An idea inside of the artist is ruminated upon and combined with some elements such as materials, space, design etc to give birth to what is called a work of art. This is illustrated vividly in the creation of the world according to the Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C (2001):

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 1:2 Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep. 1:3 God said, let there be light and there was light 1:4 God saw that the light was good, so God separated the light from the darkness. 1:5 God called the light day and the darkness 'night'.

Above quote affirms that the heavens and the earth is entirely the product of the creation of God and so the original act of creation or creative work is established. God's command of the existence of light presupposes the existence of a pre-existent matter. God, who seemingly is the number one creative artist creates the heavens and the earth, He speaks it to existence and owns it.

Aims of the Studio Doctor of Philosophy

(Cross, 1999) posits that practice-led PhDs are derived from majorly studio practice, either through studying the people, process or products using practice as the basis of investigation. It is a study where practice is used as an interrogative process. Therefore practice plays an instrumental part in the inquiry. One of the basic aims of the doctor of philosophy program in the visual arts studio is to seek advancement in visual arts and new media by working artists, art faculty teachers and all professionals in related fields. It is to give the visual artists (studio) the opportunity in the widest sense to explore space and inhabitation of space, the archive, documentary art making, language/image, software studies, network culture, performance and the role of art in peace, mediation and international relations. The studio research is further aimed at demonstrating systematic study, independence, critical competence and originality. Also, a record of good fervent 'practice' element which serves to contextualize the studio practice intellectually while clearly demonstrating its contribution to knowledge. According to the course curriculum handbook of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Delta State University, Abraka for the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Studio arts (2007), it says:

The doctoral degree in visual arts emphasizes the philosophy of art production. It is practice led in which materials, techniques/technology and other production induced ideologies take centre stage. It is envisaged that the Participatory Knowledge of the researcher as an accomplished studio master in an aspect of visual art, makes him/her a better philosopher on how it is or could be done. Professionalism in the visual art by this becomes entrenched.

Objectives of the PhD Studio Arts (Practice-led)

The practice-led Ph.D. programme of the Delta State University, Abraka model as witnessed by this study crates a space for students of all disciplines (Art history, Art education, English, Literature, Performing arts) to mention just a few to interact with a wide range of artists, scientists, theorists, media practitioners and visionaries. Students investigate their work independently in both cultural and studio context. Students are further enriched in praxis; foster change; facilitate a connection between group and personal work; provide the means for contextualizing work in the wider world; and develop interaction strategies with audiences. And so students researcher are expected to contribute significantly to the current creative cultural dialogue through informed, published, exhibited or performed work and documentation thereof. Also, practice-led research students are expected to do a rigorous philosophical study that sharpens the hand and eye as well as the mind and extends the artist's range of creative expression and her possibilities for the discovery of philosophical knowledge. It is also meant to bring together a community of practicing artists for the study of theory and philosophy at a time when we need new ways of thinking and seeing in Nigerian arts landscape. Still on the Abraka model which is an Art practice concentration designed for artists and instructors engaged in advanced research who wish to pursue their work in an environment geared towards doctoral study, and to produce studio work alongside a written dissertation. It thus therefore acknowledges artistic production as a field of intellectual inquiry capable of an equal level of theoretical elaboration and conceptual density.

Significance

Some of the significance of the practice-led doctoral programme in visual arts according to Abraka model to this study include; a steady builds on the achievements of the students masters level work,

by developing a creative project of significant and relevant practice-led research which represent an original contribution to the fields of art and culture. The specifics of each practice-led PhD project/thesis are particular to the goals, aspirations and interests of the candidate. The thesis in some cases show systematic study or step by step approach; independence; critical competence, originality and capacity of the publication in whole or in part. It thus includes a record of the 'practice' elements which serves to contextualize the practice intellectually while clearly demonstrating its contribution to knowledge. The relationship between the studio-based work and the written work is brought to the fore as practice-based research activities share a common set of resources. With this, the studio and written components of the PhD project are conceived as a whole. At project presentation levels (seminar/ critique sessions, departmental faculty), students experiment with exhibition and presentation possibilities in preparation for the final PhD defence presentation with options of exhibition display, performance or documentation).

Divergences and Criticisms

It is both heartwarming and challenging to note that since the introduction of the studio PhD in visual arts in Nigeria in 2008 pioneered by the Department of Fine and Applied arts, Delta state University, Abraka with Professor Osa. D. Egonwa playing the pivotal role (Edewor, 2015), there had been divergences and convergences for and against the scholarly studio programme. With most of its major critics coming from scholars in the art history and art education section of the Universities, seemingly supported by some MFA degree holder instructors in the universities who still hold the age long belief of the terminal status of the Master of Fine Arts degree. Some of the controversies regarding the introduction of practice-led doctorates in Nigeria include: the relative newness of the programme, the suspicions of the perceived institutionalisation and codification of the form of cultural production that is traditionally understood as intuitive, transgressive and decidedly anti-institutional. Some critics raised the issues of methodology and epistemology, which is the production of knowledge through a creative act. The issues of capabilities and capacities of qualified instructors and supervisors, lack of studio facilities, contest of legitimacy of the National Universities Commission (NUC) also surfaced. The question of what right does the NUC has to dictate which degrees an artist should have to qualify as instructors in Nigeria Universities. While it is easy to sympathize with these concerns, critics of PhD studio have forgotten the skepticism raised on a regular basis by scholars in other disciplines in the academia about the status of the MFA degree which was hitherto equated with PhD degree because of the

then terminal status of the MFA as a professional degree. The new generation of the holders of the MFA degree in the academia has come to accept the reality of their status that their MFA cannot and never be equivalent of the PhD degree after all. Interviewing Ikobi, Michael (2015), on the general acceptability of the MFA painting degree he holds from the University of Benin, raised some more issues. Said he;

“Perhaps the greatest problem with the MFA is that the degree is not understood or respected at some colleges and University though not at degree-granting art schools. Limitations in job opportunities and the exact levels to put the MFA holders are seemingly not define. Some people are employed as Assistant Lecturers, some Lecturer III while some fortunate ones bagged Lecturer II in the University system contrary to the belief of our equivalence with the PhD degree whom University employment upon entrant placed as Lecturer II. The concept of the MFA as a terminal degree” is unfamiliar to many Vice Chancellors, Rectors and school administrators whose fields do not have an equivalent structure; they see a master’s degree as no more than that. Obtaining a doctorate in the relevant studio area, he noted is perhaps the best way to obviate those insurmountable problems of parity, stagnancy, terminal delinquency, academic/professional status, respect and proper job, and salary placements.

Also the National University Commission (NUC) has spelt it out in clear terms that any degree that does not have or share the contents of higher philosophical knowledge to the level of PhD cannot and never be equated with PhD. While this paper shares that we need to retain some skepticism and tread consciously about the ongoing professionalization of studio art education in Nigeria, it is also important to recognize the increasing pressure exerted on art production, art education and culture generally by forces of the new dictates of standards of instruction in the academia in Nigeria. Just like in United States of America in the 1970’s during the widespread introduction of Master of Fine Arts Programme, Kesta (2008) notes that:

They underestimate the extent to which contemporary art production is already subject to disciplinary protocols and forms of formal and informal institutionalization that exercises a decisive influence on the kinds of art that younger artists produce.

One more thing the critics of the PhD studio (practice-led) failed to realize is the National Universities Commission's (NUC) privilege of supporting and encouraging more academic technocratic agenda for Nigeria which gives more space, opportunities and privileges to science and technology.

Benefits of the PhD Visual Arts (Practice-Led)

Just as Egonwa (2012), puts it:

The truth is that there is need for it. The PhD degree prepares one to be a scholar; it has to do with thought, theory and philosophy. Research enables you to philosophize over an issue. If you do not philosophize you will not have the basis for doing scholarly work.

This statement thus applies to artists who choose to be “hybrid individuals” who can both be artist researchers and artist philosophers with broader horizons to both domains. Artists who are in pedagogical domain at the higher level particularly in the institutions of higher learning (Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities) are in the present dispensation encouraged to add knowledge-based philosophical research streams to their training. This will improve and give research practices that are theoretically robust, purposeful, process rich, idea based, strategic and adapt methods and innovations that are unique and distinct from traditional systems, and forms of inquiry.

One of the benefits of the practice-led PhD programme is that it provides rigorous training that helps artist-researchers expand their studio practice as well as the theories. In an interview with Prince Eweka, a doctorate degree holder in Ceramics (studio), he claims the academic exercise he passed through during his doctoral programme at the Delta State University has expanded his studio practice and theory beyond his expectation. He adduced this from his performance at his recent exhibition of his works and the lecture he gave on Ceramics: A Tool for Social Interface at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. Said he; “I am now better and can

now perform as both artist and philosopher with broader horizons in both domains. With the successes recorded so far within the space of 7 years (2008 - 2015) from the PhD graduates of Studio Arts in Nigeria, pressures hitherto mounted by the NUC to holders of MFA degrees who are instructors or adjunct instructors in Nigeria's Creative Art departments of our universities will no longer be because of the fear of not having courses of their choice. Unlike before when majority of them are lost to some not too related scholarships in the Studio Arts.

Jari (2014) in justify the introduction of PhD Studio Arts at the Ahmadu Bello University says: We reckoned that it was more rational to introduce the PhD in Painting and Sculpture to maintain the promotion of their distinctive scholarships than to lose Painters and Sculptors to other related disciplines.

Hitherto, many of these MFA holders in the academia seemingly feel limited because of the terminal status of the MFA degree and for not being allowed to pursue to the PhD level the discipline that earned them the Bachelors and Master of Fine Arts degrees respectively. Some believed the MFA degree holds them back in a realm where advancement goes to PhDs.

Grant (2009), Kester (2008), Smith (2008), Egonwa (2012), Wilson (2008), unanimously agree that the advent of the PhD studio degree for visual artists in the United States and Nigeria is making it easier for the holders of the degree to get research oriented appointment or placement. In particular people who have stayed with Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) find it harder to get such types of teaching appointments in the academia. They testified to the fact that the moment visual artists obtain a Ph.D in their field, they are employed.

In an interview George Bauer in Grant (2011) puts his experience in this way:

“When I applied for teaching jobs with my MFA, I never made it to the finals of interviewing, said George Bauer, who received an MFA in Sculpture from Texas A&M in 1988 and doctorate in studio from Texas Tech. in 2002. After receiving a PhD, “he makes it to the finals” currently a full time faculty member at the Savannah College of Art and Design, he is convinced that it is just a matter of time before the MFAs won't be able to compete for job with PhD's.

Another benefit of the doctoral degree (practice-led) is the ability of holders to teach a wider variety of courses, such as classes in art theory and history which had hitherto been the province of art historians and art educators.

Smith (2008) avers that the PhD qualifies the artist-philosopher to teach some philosophy courses traditionally taught by non-artists in the American University. Also, the PhD studio helps to bring together a community of practicing artists for the study of theory and philosophy at a time when we need new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing. Covertly, the rigorous philosophical study during the programme sharpens the hand and eye as well as the mind and extends the artists range of creative expression and her possibilities for the discovery of philosophical knowledge.

Findings and Conclusion

In most of the higher institutions in Nigeria where Visual Arts is taught at the postgraduate levels, this study found out that art history and art practice are quite often segregated. In some cases, PhD programs in art history are housed separately from MFA programmes in art practice. This paper opines that scholars should at the graduate levels be more committed to trans-disciplinary work that challenges this segregation. It advocates a Visual Arts department that would foster a robust continuity between studio practice, art theory and art history. This will in no measure help in bringing art practitioners, theorists and historians together to encourage innovative work at the boundaries of disciplines, discourses and methodologies. If the visual arts practice-led PhD is encouraged, it will further engender advance research and create a better knowledge based environment for innovations and exploration in both written dissertation and studio work. It will thus bring to fore artistic production as a field of intellectual inquiry as it is done and evident in other disciplines, such as in the area of health (Candy, 2006), nursing, music, veterinary studies, engineering, and law (UK Council for Graduates Education, 1997).

With the establishment of the practice-led PhD program in Studio Arts through the pioneering efforts of Delta State University, Abraka; Ahamadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Port Harcourt and lately University of Benin and the successful defence of the doctoral thesis of their pioneer students in three of the universities except university of Benin, it is hopeful that the art practice concentration will despite the dangers of institutionalization, provide a space in which

critical forms of cultural production, writing and analysis can be sustained, and even flourish. Also, it is hoped that with the varieties of study areas now available at the PhD level in the Visual Arts (studio, history, education, philosophy) more openings or spaces are now available for artists to get to the peak of their academic careers without subjugation, limitation or intimidation. This will help to eliminate totally the statement of (Jari 2014) that says; it is almost impossible to defend a promotion case to the rank of professor of a candidate, without a PhD in almost all Nigerian Universities. What this means in essence is that MFA is no longer acceptable as the highest degree in Studio Arts. Be that as it may, there are lots of privileges and benefits in the Visual Arts technocratic agenda. Presently in Nigeria, there are very few doctorate degree holders and Professors in all areas of Visual Arts at administrative, political, social and academic levels. These few intellectuals are not enough to turn things around on a faster level in the development of the profession in Nigeria. It is a common knowledge that getting things done or approved for developmental process is in most cases a game of number and intensive lobbying. For the mere fact that Visual Arts have fewer representations at the highest policy and decision making system of administrations in Nigeria is in itself a minus for the development of the profession. As a matter of fact, the National Universities Commissions matching order of asking every academic staff of the University to develop themselves and disciplines to doctoral level is a blessing in disguise for the Visual Arts subsector. It has once again opened up the visual arts landscape both in theory and practice. Aside from the visual arts technocratic agenda, there must be a deliberate move by leaders, academicians and professors in the Visual Arts to create an art research agenda that will force new relationships with the world beyond the academy in a way that could moderate the debate across the entire spectrum of humanities and technology.

This study is interested currently in a new domain coming into being that will provide space for independent possibilities. This paper is not of the opinion that there are no grey areas even in our “perceived hurry” to develop the studio areas at the doctoral level of academics in Nigeria. There may likely be dull, grey methodologies in the new research initiatives. These may be dangerous threat for the programmes and its ambassadors presently. But, this calls for all instructors, researchers, graduates, curriculum drafters, curators, art dealers, gallerists and all stakeholders to be more willing to openly discuss these new programmes at seminars, workshops, conferences etc. with each other in order to resist bureaucratic, institutionalized exercises of self-reproduction. Standing on the platform that an art-research mode of inquiry open to a larger world beyond the

academy will take advantage of the potential of the academy and at the same time be transformative of the academy. For the PhD practice-led studio programmes to have the acceptability it desires among all stakeholders, this study opines that there should be the formation of a common acceptable curriculum for all the areas of studio arts and if possible a formation of a national association of PhD programmes for studio areas of visual arts. This will help in no little way to regulate and standardize the studio PhD programmes instructions and research for visual artists.

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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).

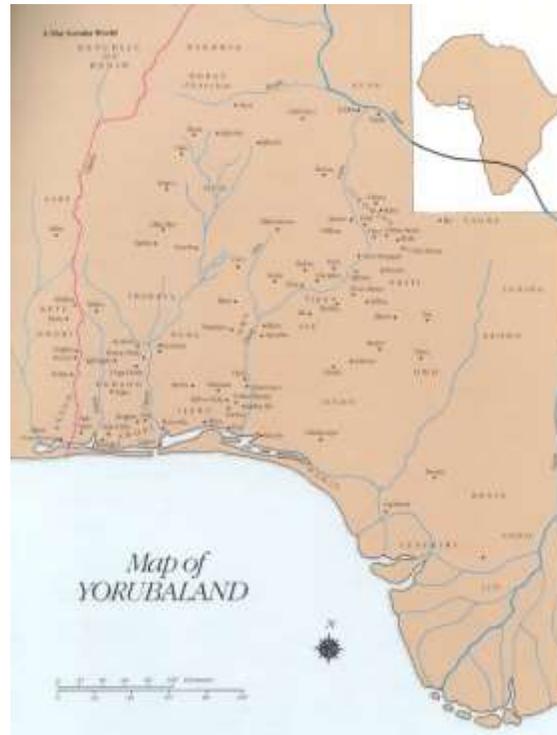


Fig. 1. Yoruba Cities and Towns of Southwestern Nigeria including Eastern part of the Republic of Benin. YORUBA: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought. Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York. 1989.

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 (Ololdi, 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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CULTURE: PROMOTING CREATIVITY, UNITY AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

Culture is one of the phenomenal premise and foundation upon which a well-grounded creativity, unity and identity of a people could be built. This paper takes a cursory look at what culture is all about and then delves into how it can veritably serve as a fulcrum for the promotion of the way of life of a people. The paper avows that since the world is now a global village, it is nearly impossible for us to remain uninfluenced by other cultures. It therefore advocates that we should strive towards learning the positive aspect of other people's culture and domesticate them to suit our needs and purposes.

Keywords: Culture, Promoting creativity, Unity and Identity.

Introduction

Culture can be regarded as a recognizable pattern of living, which include physical/ material and mental practice and expressions by/of a group of people that distinguishes them from other peoples, societies or nations. Visual arts and other forms of arts (non-visual arts) which have evolved from activities of mankind are veritable avenues for fostering culture as a phenomenon towards promoting creativity, unity, and identity, particularly in Nigeria. This paper discusses culture and its influences on visual arts and other creative activities of man, such as writing, music, dance and others, in relation to the symbiotic relationship between culture and the arts. This paper also asserts the fact that arts in their various forms draw their strength from culture, while the former serve as veritable agents of projecting the latter. Suggestions for the effective promotion of creativity, unity and identity via the vehicle of culture are also articulated.

What is Culture?

It is pertinent to clearly understand some of the keywords in this paper before we delve into the crux of the matter. Culture as a phenomenon has been defined by several writers. Its Latin origin connects it with "cultura" or "colere", the past participle of a cult which means "cultivate or

“inhabit”. Culture according to The New Webster’s Dictionary, includes “...the social and religious structures and intellectual and artistic manifestation, etc.

Outhwaite (in Orifa, 2003) shared his perception of the meaning of culture thus: “His cultural inheritance is the natural world plus what he has made of it by its material creations, his arts, science, ideas, and philosophies.” Culture is therefore informed by the creative processes employed by man in evolving a unique pattern of doing things shared by a particular society.

An average traditional African setting is an embodiment of cultural and aesthetic panorama that could be tangible or non-tangible; these include artefacts, costume, language, religion, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, greetings, folktales, and folklores, which are transmitted from generation to generation amongst a people or nation. There are major cultural legacies that shape people’s worldviews and identities. The cultural practices of a people influence the direction of the form and content of their art. In the same breath, the creative outputs, such as art objects, songs, moral/creative values and so on, play a crucial role in the projection and sustenance of culture and values. The symbols with which the artist works are framed by the prevailing visual and oral cultural elements in society.

Our Warped Cultural Perception and Western Indoctrination

Culture will remain powerful and continue to make an impact as much as the people make it so. Unfortunately, some Africans continue to look down on their culture, while looking up to the foreign ones for inspiration and validation. Falola (2020) argues that scholars and policy makers are of the opinion that Africans should throw away their traditions in favour of Western ideologies. This development has profoundly warped African cultural perception, thereby distancing themselves from anything that connect with their culture. Rather than throw away the baby with the bath water, it will be more beneficial for us as a people to seek ways of adapting the inherent positive values in our culture to suit our current realities.

Many Nigerians do not attach a modicum of importance or respect to art objects or cultural practices as they are scornfully perceived and derided as being demonic by some other religious fanatics. People tend to trivialize and devalue what they have in the absence of the right knowledge. Scripture puts it right when it states that “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6 NIV). We so much despise our culture that we do not want to associate with anything that has a connection with it, to such a ridiculous extent as rejecting our traditional attires! Thus, how will our culture thrive with such behaviour and mindset?

Despite being colonized for 347 years by the British Empire, yet 80% of the Indian population still practice their Hindu culture and other traditional religions (Shyllon, 2023). Similar resistance against cultural subjugation by the West was demonstrated by the Japanese. They vehemently rejected the imposition of Western religion and cultural dictates on their people and by so doing, Japan was able to save her people from foreign religious indoctrination and total colonization agenda.

How Culture Promotes Creativity

“Creativity is the quality that enables us to generate novel approaches to situations and to discover new and improved solutions to problems” (Vogel, 2014). Creativity in relation to visual arts and other creative endeavours draws its strength from culture. Emifoniye (2003) insist that “Visual art is an activity of man that has evolved from a cultural process.” This aforementioned assertion also apply to other creative fields.

Culture as a phenomenon usually manifests itself in tangibly expressive objects that can be referred to as material culture or cultural objects (Orifa, 2003). This assertion indicates that the total sum of the aggregates of both tangible and none tangible materials in a society serves as resources for the creatives in that environment. This stance is corroborated by Heidegger in Hainic (2010), when he declared that an artist’s production is an embodiment of the materials (tangible or non-tangible) available to the artist. Thus, the creative minds in a given society, regardless of the genre, are usually inspired by the prevailing cultural values. We can then infer that creative icons such as artists, musicians and writers, which include Yusuf Grillo (1934-2021), Bruce Onabrakpeya (b.1932), Fela Anikulapo (1938-1997), Wole Soyinka (b.1934), Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), Harrie Bazunu (b.1966), Nelson Edewor (b.1970), Chimamanda Adichie (b.1977) and others are profoundly influenced by their immediate culture.

Nigeria with its cultural diversity has the capacity to effectively foster creativity amongst the youth. This is informed by the fact that when people from different cultural backgrounds and experiences converge, myriads of creative thinking can be stimulated. Elements of culture, such as the visual arts and the non-visual arts (literature, dance, music and so on), can inspire creative activities because when pupils are exposed to various forms of creative expression, new ideas are possible.



Figure 1: Harrie Bazunu, 2007, *Wekobetcha* (You’re Welcome).

Installation: Terra Cotta, Old Naira-Notes, and Coins. Source: Bazunu (2023) p. 34

The Niger Delta experiences, and some culture-specific elements are often projected in the visual expressions of Bruce Onobrakpeya. Such titles as *Martyrdom of the Ogoni Nine*, *Smoke from the Broken Pipe series*, *Akporode*, *Mamiwata*, and *Emuobonuvie* are a few examples. Bazunu (2023), in his 2007 sculpture, *Wekobetcha* (you’re welcome), highlighted the traditional hospitality of Kola nuts presentation to a guest, amongst the Urhobo, Isoko, and Ijo people. The theme of protest, oil

exploitation, and its negative effects on the environment and people of the oil-rich Niger Delta are visually constructed in Edewor's sculptures (Bazunu, 2023, Ophori 2024). Edewor employed visual elements from *Ivwri* (figures of personal and communal aggression), common to the Urhobo, Isoko and Ijo people to pen down his narrative.



Figure 2: Nelson Edewor, 1997, *Burden is Our Reward*. Mortar/Concrete, 79 x 137 x 97cm, University of Benin, Ekehuan Campus, Benin City. Source: Bazunu (2023: 32).

Culture can also promote creativity when collaboration and teamwork are encouraged among pupils. This is due to the fact that sharing ideas and building upon each other's strengths can lead to unique discoveries and solutions as well as widen perspectives. It is noteworthy that when there is freedom of expression as we have in our country, individuals with unique and creative ideas will be encouraged to articulate their creative perspective knowing fully well that there would not be unpleasant consequences.

It is pertinent for us to know that a culture such as ours that encourages the acquisition of education and skill development opportunities will certainly inspire creativity. With the right education which happens to be the foundation of knowledge acquisition, individuals, especially, the youth will possess the ability to unleash their creative potentials effectively and rooted in their culture.

How Culture Promotes Unity

Cultural unity implies oneness which can be fostered by language. Obialo (2018) acknowledges that Language is a powerful unifier in any culture because "... language conveys the meaning of concepts or experiences of a particular people". One of the ways of brainwashing people to hate themselves is by taking away their language. It is a sad commentary that most parents cannot communicate effectively in their respective indigenous languages. Our various indigenous languages have become vernacular, thus, going into extinction.

In the process of building the tower of Babel (from Biblical narratives), in order to deter the people from realizing their ambition, God disunited them through a lack of effective (language) communication. This is an indicator that language is a powerful tool for communication,

interaction, and the promotion of unity and cohesion in any society. If we truly crave unity, then our youths need to embrace our indigenous language; at least, they have the capacity to be multilingual. Through sharing the same cultural values and beliefs, people can be brought together as a way of establishing common ground to foster unity and understanding. Since Nigeria is a culturally diverse entity, by embracing and appreciating these diverse cultural backgrounds, unity can be fostered.

Another avenue through which culture can promote unity is through cultural exchange and integration. Cultural events and activities such as festivals, ceremonies, carnivals, art exhibitions, trade fairs or food fairs, usually serve as opportunities for people to have cross-cultural interactions. The participants in such activities can learn from one another, thereby, promoting social connections, unity and understanding. Since culture provides a framework for communication amongst people, cultural events and activities can facilitate meaningful conversations through which conflicts can be resolved for fostering unity and cohesion.

Also, cultural activities such as often observed on School's Cultural Day's celebrations can serve as an avenue through which the culture and heritage of minority groups can be showcased. This can aid cultural expression that is capable of fostering unity and inclusiveness where everyone feels appreciated and accepted.

How Culture Promotes Identity

Culture is a profound agent in shaping and promoting individual and collective identity. This is due to the fact that shared beliefs and values, norms, and traditions are transmitted from generation to generation. By involving in cultural practices and embracing cultural values by the youths, a sense of belonging and identification with their community or group can be developed.

The embedded cultural rituals and traditions serve as symbolic acts that are entrenched in a community's history and values. By participating in these activities, individuals can connect with their cultural heritage, this helps to reinforce a state of identity and creates a sense of belonging. In addition, cultural symbols, icons and artefacts, such as national flags, historical landmarks, religious symbols, and traditional clothing, are objects of identity. These items, when appreciated by individuals can also serve as their cultural identity and create a sense of pride within their community.

Teaching cultural history, traditions and values in schools and community setting can help youths develop an appreciation for their cultural heritage. This will in turn encourage them to identify and connect with their heritage.

Language is an important part of any culture as it is a means of communication. It is an essential tool for preserving cultural heritage, thus, a sense of belonging and identity within a linguistic community can be fostered if the youths embrace their indigenous language

The feat being wrought in the music industry, globally, by Nigerian Afro musicians is phenomenal. These remarkable achievements by contemporary music artistes such as Asa, 9ice, WizKid, Tiwa Savage, Davido, Burna Boy, Rema, Asake, Flavour, and Phyno, among others, can be attributed to the fact that they infused or adopted their respective indigenous language as a means of communicating their messages. They are able to evolve a unique identity for themselves via their respective language under the umbrella of the Afrobeat genre of music.

Current Reality and Globalization

I quite recognize the pertinent and current trend of the world without borders—globalization, which is fast blurring local and national differences. This is because a culture can hardly improve without the experience of other cultures. Notwithstanding, for an enviable cultural status, Nigeria needs to improve and integrate its social, ethnic, and tribal diversity to evolve peculiar cultural cohesion. This should spur us towards evolving our own unique identity embodied in our culture. According to a Yoruba aphorism, “Odo to ba gbagbe orisun e maa gbe ni” loosely translated, a river that forgets its source will certainly run dry. With this, it is imperative for us to encourage our youth to embrace the positive aspect of our culture. This is because the nations of the world that are prospering are doing that by blending their culture into their national development plan, countries such as China, Japan, and India are good examples. These countries embark on this trajectory because they realized that their culture(s) has the capacity to boost creativity, unity and identity.

Recommendations:

- Efforts should be geared towards the teaching of cultural subjects such as visual arts, dance, music, and drama as a way of exposing the students to their culture and heritage.
- Collaboration is important, as such, students should be encouraged to participate in group assignments in visual arts as a way of fostering creativity.
- The school, being one of the major institutions defining culture and values, has the responsibility to provide the students with the necessary incentive towards cultural appreciation and emancipation. These incentives include: encouraging students to be involved in art-related activities such as sculpting, painting, drawing, drama, dance etc.
- It is also pertinent for stakeholders in Nigeria to exert concerted efforts towards harnessing indigenous knowledge from various cultures and explore their potentials in our current reality. This is necessary because this approach has led to growth and development in other climes.
- Regularly, excursions should be organized for pupils to visit our museums and national cultural heritage sites.
- Musicians, visual artists, filmmakers, and so on, should be encouraged to infuse their productions with cultural content to serve as agents of uniting the people.

Conclusion:

Culture is a universal phenomenon; it is what makes us unique as a people. It bestows us with respect because it encompasses and projects our worldview. Nigeria does not lack in rich cultural heritage but the will and zeal to harness it is poor. It is only a virile culture that can promote and project a nation on a global stage, therefore we need to recognize the fact that our culture, if well-appreciated has the capacity to promote and project our creativity, unity and identity, globally.

Since the world is now a global village, it is nearly impossible for us to remain uninfluenced by other cultures. However, what we should strive towards is to learn the positive aspect of other people and domesticate it to suit our needs and purpose.

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TECHNIQUES AND IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING DESIGN

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Abstract

Creative photography is an art form that transcends mere representation, instead involves using visual elements and techniques to convey emotion, tell stories and evoke thoughts. This study explores the techniques and importance of creative photography by highlighting its ability to transform ordinary scenes into extraordinary images. Through an examination of various creative photography techniques, including composition, lighting, and colour and post-processing, this research demonstrates how photographers can break free from conventional norms and produce innovative and visually striking images. The importance of creative photography is also discussed. By exploring the techniques and importance of creative photography, this study also aims to inspire photographers, graphic artists and photography enthusiasts to explore beyond the ordinary and push into the realm of visual storytelling and explore new ways of seeing and interpreting the world around us. The methods of this research are literature review, case studies, interviews and surveys whereas studio experiments involving the use of editing software were also used; and at the end the findings includes both technical, artistic and thematic results.

Keywords: Creative, Techniques, Examination, Transform, Lighting.

INTRODUCTION

Photography has long been an artistic medium for capturing and conveying the world around us; from the earliest daguerreotypes to the latest digital images, photography has evolved into a diverse and dynamic art form that is capable of evoking emotions, sparking imagination and challenging perceptions. At the nucleus of this art form is creative photography, a genre that transcends mere representation, instead uses visual elements and techniques to convey meaning, tell stories and inspire creativity.

In the words of Sturken and Cartwright (2001) creative photography is more than just pointing a camera and clicking a shutter; it is an art that requires vision skill, creativity and the knowledge of computer designs and manipulation software; as photographers seek to capture the essence of their subjects, they convey complex ideas and emotions thereby creating visually striking images that engage and inspire audiences. Whether used in advertising, fine art, journalism or social media, creative photography has the power to communicate, connect and transform.

Aim and Objectives of the study:

Whereas the aim of this study is to give the reader or others who are not skilled in this art a ready and handy manual on how to carry out a cutting edge creative photography project, the objectives of this study are to:

- a. Identify the major techniques and importance of creative photography.
- b. State the various ways creative photography can be used in visual communication and advertising design.
- c. Itemize the various techniques to achieve a good creative photography work
- d. Demonstrate how to infuse creative photography into advertising design

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Although there are specialized professional digital cameras used in the process of creative photography, in this era of digital technology, phone cameras with high camera resolutions can as well serve the purpose but for the purpose of this essay, the following professional digital cameras are recommended for high-resolution shots.

- a) DSLR (Digital Single-Lens Reflex). This camera uses a prism and mirror system to view scenes through its lens.
- b) Mirror-less. This is similar to DSLRs but does not have a mirror but this feature makes it more compact.
- c) Point-and-shoot. This camera is compact and automatic made for casual shoots.

Other materials needed for creative photography are tripod stand which makes the camera stable and gives steady output.



Figure 1 (Left) DSLR Digital Camera. Source: iStock.com
(Right) Camera Tripod Stand. Source: iStock.com

The Computer can be regarded as the last basic necessity for a successful creative photography exercise. On the computer are all the basic tools and filters necessary for post-shooting operations.

Figure 2 Adobe Photoshop interface for transforming the ordinary photograph on laptop computer



Source: Felix Osaigbovo, June 2025

RESULT

In this essay, it was discovered that creative photography in visual communication and advertising design has been responsible for advancing the success of advertising with these reasons: It helps build and maintain brand identity and reputation; it drives sales in the sense that effective advertising leads to increased sales and revenue; it differentiates products as it helps distinguish products or services from competitors.

Creative photography in visual communication and advertising informs and educates as it informs consumers about products, services and benefits; it builds customer relationships, it help maintain relationships with target audiences. Creative photography in visual communication and advertising supports business growth and contributes to business expansion; it also creates jobs opportunities. It also promotes innovation and creativity in products, services and marketing strategies; it enhances customer engagement, fosters loyalty and encourages feedback and finally, creative photography in visual communication and advertising supports economic growth, it contributes to economic activity and growth by stimulating demand and consumption.

DISCUSSION

Barnbaum (2017) is of the opinion that creative photography brings into focus the development of new patterns and ways of visualization in various lighting situation such as the rearrangement, modification and manipulation of images and in creative photography, there are various interesting ways of manipulating and enhancing digital images.

Creative photography means giving a photo a new look and feel, so making it creative; it could be referred to as a rather unique category of photography. Sontag (2025) submits that this genre includes photo retouch editing that is specially done to give a special feel and spotlight on a particular theme. It involves a new way of enhancing photos; otherwise they could just be seen as commonplace photos. These photo enhancements have become a normal practice in the creative industry as the post-shooting enhancements will always dichotomize creative photography from ordinary or normal photography. In most cases, Shenz (2012) opines that creative photography is more often than not done with the computer; and often times, more than one digital photograph are merged and filters and enhancement effects added.

The major difference between digital and creative photography according to Wright (2006) is that while digital photography is done with the digital camera with some limited tricks, creative photography involves a combination of digital photography and computer manipulations. In a nutshell, a creative photograph would be that, on which the graphic artist has deliberately used diverse filters and effects to attain its desired final product. Figure 3 is a typical example of creative photography. Here, there are four layers that were worked on and merged and at the end, looks as though it is a single layer. A careful look at figure 3 shows that the sunset sky is one layer, the foreground with landscape is another layer; the tree is a different layer while the man on the trunk of the tree makes a fourth layer. Each layer was worked on with Adobe Photoshop software and at the end, were merged to become one plane and even as they were merged, it is still impossible for anyone to notice where they were joined owing to the feathering effects on each line of joining.

Fig 3. A typical Creative photograph



Source: Felix Osaigbovo, May, 2024

Techniques of Creative Photography:

Creative photography is a radical departure from the conventional photography and a moderation of traditional concepts and ways of handling photography. Curtin (2011) asserts that when a photograph is in a digital format, one can edit or manipulate it with photo-editing software and in some cases; images can be improved upon by eliminating or reducing its flaws by adjusting the tones, colours and sharpness. Improvements in images have become easy with the availability of current image editing software like Apples Aperture, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Light room; with this software, the creative photographer perceives the essential qualities of the subject and decodes it according to his taste in a post-shooting editing manner.

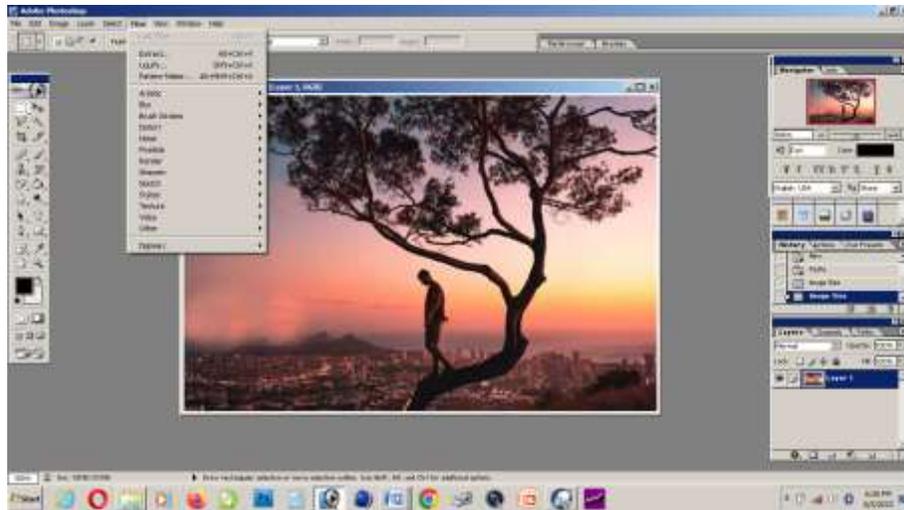
This can be seen in figure 4 where the image was “imported” onto Adobe Photoshop environment and it is at this stage the graphic artist decides what to do to the photograph and it is also at this stage that the photograph undergoes all enhancements that the artist wants to do. Most photographs used for advertisement purposes undergo retouching at this stage especially wedding photographs and those to be used in television adverts.

Fig 4. Adobe Photoshop environment.



Source: Felix Osaigbovo, May, 2024

Fig 5. Enhanced Adobe Photoshop Filter dropdown



Computer interpolation of creative photography. Source: Felix Osaigbovo, May, 2025

Figure 5 shows where the filter menus are used to enhance the photograph; a careful look reveals the filter menu which drops down sub-menus of other filters like sharpen, pixelate, blur, artistic and others. All that is needed to produce a cutting-edge creative photograph are embedded in the filter menu of the Adobe Photoshop software and it is instructive to note that these various filters are powered by artificial intelligence technology.

Interpolation of creative photography in advertising design:

The starting point of any good design work is composition; it renders the design comprehensible in outlook which makes it interesting to behold. Vanden Bergh and Katz (1999) are of the view

that composition is vital to designs in the sense that it is the basic prerequisite of any design irrespective of the medium being worked on because if the composition is faulty, the design becomes chaotic.

In respect to the above claim, Pointer (2011) describes composition as:

The ways in which pieces or components are combined and arranged visually to tell a story. Proper composition reflects alignment, placement, grouping, visual flow and space within a layout thus this outline can be any standard. Once a targeted audience and rationale have been determined, then composition, constituents and concept can cover that identified purpose making for a successful design.

Supporting this assertion of Pointer (2011), Simmons (2013) thinks that some designers, in most cases do their designs with pre-conceived opinion; that is to say, most of them already have what to do in mind without necessarily taking into consideration the key ingredients that makes up good composition; and in most cases, these designers, because they do not have the basic qualification, does their design in a haphazard manner and so a way remedying the situation might just be to go over it again and again because composition still remains the structure on which any good design is based.

In the same way, Simmons (2013) proffers solution to such anomaly that the principles on which composition should be based are rhythm, balance, golden proportion, and hierarchy, rule of thirds, unity and dichotomy between positive and negative spaces. Relating to the above, Pointer (2011) suggested five principles of good composition which are Alignment, Contrast, Proximity, White Space and repetition. Whereas Simmons (2013) and Pointer (2011) came up with different levels of principles, Sanders (2011) advances a more detailed description of design layout. He points out that principles of design should include 'eye movement' as it relates to other principles that have been put forward by other experts. Sanders (2011) explain further that the physical elements of layout should include white space, trade mark, illustration and signature. In furtherance of the above indices put forward by Simmons (2013), Pointer (2011) and Sanders (2011), this researcher came up with the following as aspects of advertising and graphic design layout:

Introductory Slogan:

This part introduces the product to prospective customers and in most cases may be a way of calling attention on the product with captivating catch phrases; for instance, the age long UBA advert catch phrase till date has been '*Wise men bank with UBA*'; this simple catch phrase has become associated with UBA over the years and in all their adverts both in electronic and print media, it is what introduces the product, that is UBA banking to would-be customers.

Illustration:

This is the pictorial aspect of ad designs; the purpose is that people who cannot read would be able to decode and appreciate the pictorials be they photographs, cartoons and other drawings, logos and other pictorial elements.

Copy:

This is the typographical and the text portion of the advert design. It conveys information about whatever is being advertised; it elucidates the element and benefits of whatever product or services being advertised. Sometimes, it highlights prices and other beneficial areas of the product.

Subject Matter:

The subject matter does the actual ‘talking’ in any advertising design, it tells the targeted audience what the product does, its efficacy and convinces prospective customers why they must patronize the product and its benefits. Here, attention is concentrated on making the product sell. The subject matter could be emphasized either in illustration, bold texts and wild colours in order to attract interests.

White Space:

The importance white space in any ad design cannot be over flogged in the sense that it is the availability of white space that gives the composition breathing space; this does not refer to the literal ‘white’ part of the design; white space helps define and separate different sections. Osaigbovo (2024) thinks that it is the white space that gives the design some ‘room to breathe’ as the design might become chaotic or congested if it is clustered with extraneous elements. In figure 6, even as the background is predominantly green, the white space or negative space is well utilized and that is why the design does not look choked.

Pay Off:

In most existing advert designs, Meggs and Purvis (2020) posits that there is always a pay off; this could be regarded as ‘the final word’ or the tagline as the case may be as it may come often at the bottom of the design. It could be the slogan for a institution product, service, program or event for instance in the advert of MTN Nigeria, the slogan ‘*Everywhere you go*’ is their pay-off or tagline and that is why it always comes at the bottom of the advert. A look at figure 6 shows an advert design of a computer engineering service; all the elements used in the advert are computer related but an element of surprise in the design is the inverted bottle corks; this might look confusing to a novice and that part of the design calls for curiosity but the artist decided to use it to attract attention because the corks are deliberately placed where the cord of the computer mouse broke and that was where the problem started. Another interesting aspect of the design in figure 6 is the introductory slogan; here, the word “disconnected” is represented by broken line which is an indication of distortion of flow of current.

Fig 6. Advert of Service



Advert design of service. Source: Felix Osaigbovo, May, 2025

With the foregoing, the importance of creative photography in visual communication and advertising design could not have been overemphasized as this writer summarizes it as follows: Creative photography captures attention as unique perspectives and techniques are capable of arresting viewers' attention. The story-telling potentials of creative photography conveys emotions, ideas and narratives; creative photography evokes emotions as the images engender feelings, empathy and connections; also creative photography enhances communication, the visuals convey complex ideas simply and effectively and it encourages experimentation and innovation. Creative photography inspires, educates and influences audiences making it a powerful medium for self-expression and communication and also projects cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

Creative photography plays a significant role in visual communication and advertising design so serving as a formidable tool for the conveyance of images, evoking emotions and capturing attention. The techniques employed in creative photography according to Grundberg (2009) can significantly enhance the impact of an image, making it more effective in communicating the intended message. As demonstrated in this essay, the importance of creative photography in visual communication and advertising design lies in its ability to create visually engaging, appealing and thought-provoking images that resonate with audiences, build brand identity and drive consumer engagement. By understanding and applying the techniques of creative photography, graphic artists and advertisers can harness its potentials to create compelling visual narratives that captivate and persuade. Ultimately, the strategic use of creative photography in visual communication and

advertising design can lead to more effective and memorable campaigns that underscore the significance of the medium in this digital age.

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CHROMATIC APPROPRIATION IN STUDIO PRACTICES: VISUAL STYLES AND TECHNIQUES FROM AVIAN INSPIRATION

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Abstract

This exploration reflects the appropriation of avian chromatics in contemporary studio practice, spotting how colours derived from selected bird species can inform and transform visual styles and techniques. Concentrating on the tropical avifauna of the Niger Delta, the study draws on the chromatic aesthetic resources by appropriating avian hues, tonal variations, and surface textures. The study explores how these natural references can be moved into painting progressions that create new stylistic expressions. Espousing a practice-led methodology, the study places the studio as a place of research and knowledge production. Through material exploration, the study examines how avian chromatics may be arranged beyond mere visualization but into painterly and tactile expressive studio outcomes. Also, the study engages critically with discourses on appropriation, materiality, and ecology in contemporary art, situating the studio outcomes within abstraction and a minimalist approach. The findings highlight that avian-inspired chromatic strategies function not only as sources of aesthetic innovation but also as catalysts for technical experimentation. By integrating bird-derived colours into painting, the research develops hybrid modes of visual expression that blur distinctions between observation, invention, and abstraction. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that chromatic appropriation from avian inspiration enriches both the formal and conceptual dimensions of studio practice, offering new pathways for artistic inquiry while contributing to ongoing debates on ecology, artistic expressions, identity, and colour in contemporary visual arts.

Keywords: Studio practice, Visual styles, Avian hues, painting techniques, and contemporary art

Introduction

Recent art and curatorial writing shows a renewed public and curatorial interest in avian themes, signaling a broader cultural moment in which bird-inspired colour is being reappraised for contemporary artistic practice (including exhibitions that foreground ecological and postcolonial dimensions of natural-material use). Curated events contain epistemological processes and are presentational rather than representational (Lind, 2021). These accounts are helpful for situating studio outcomes in contemporary exhibition and curatorial contexts.

Discussions of colour in artistic practice increasingly emphasize the entanglement of perceptual, material, and cultural dimensions. Contemporary studies have expanded the remit of colour research beyond classical colour theory to include conservation/chromatic reintegration concerns, material ageing, and the communicative role of hue in situational contexts. As opined by (Reymore et al., 2025), hue becomes a bridge between perceptual immediacy and symbolic meaning. These strands highlight that colour choices in painting are never purely decorative: they implicate material formulation, surface behavior, and long-term stability, all of which matter in studio experimentation that seeks to appropriate and transform avian chromatics into paint strategies.

Colour has long been central to artistic practice, not only as a formal element but also as a medium of expression, symbolism, and cultural identity. In studio-based art research, colour is often approached through processes of experimentation, where its visual, material, and affective dimensions become subjects of inquiry (Westermann, 2024). Within this broad discourse, the natural environment provides an enduring source of chromatic inspiration, offering palettes, tonal variations, and surface qualities that have historically influenced artistic traditions across cultures.

Among these natural references, avian species hold a distinctive position, as their plumage displays some of the most vivid and structurally complex chromatic phenomena found in nature (Ke et al., 2024; Corbett, Brumfield, & Faircloth, 2024). The striking hues, iridescent patterns, and layered textures of birds constitute a dynamic resource for rethinking colour strategies within contemporary studio practices. The Niger Delta is rich in biodiversity, offers a range of avifauna whose feathers embody vibrant tonalities and intricate visual patterns.

These chromatic features serve not only as aesthetic inspiration but also as conceptual frameworks for exploring new modes of visual style and technique. By appropriating and reinterpreting avian hues, tonal variations, and surface textures, avian chromatics come alive in painting, with emphasis on the tropical bird species of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It emphasizes the extraordinary diversity and unique coloration of local avifauna, while also documenting anthropogenic pressures on habitats. Understanding the ecological and cultural context of the Niger Delta helps to ground chromatic appropriation ethically and materially: selected species' palettes are not only visual resources but also indicators of ecological processes and of local cultural relationships with birdlife.

This focus on Niger Delta tropical birds is both an abundant chromatic archive and a site where sustainability and representation must be critically considered. Through iterative processes of observation, translation, and material exploration, the study examines how avian-inspired chromatics may be reconfigured beyond mere representation into symbolic and expressive registers (Hamilton & Hansen, 2024). Appropriation, in this context, is understood not as a mere act of reproduction but as a creative process of translation, where natural forms and hues are reimagined through artistic agency (Westermann, 2024). This approach resonates with contemporary discourses in visual arts that situate practice itself as research, capable of generating theoretical insights through material engagement (Li & Zhang, 2025; van Beek, 2025).

Appropriation theory underscores the cultural and ethical dimensions of borrowing and reworking visual elements from natural sources (Kearney, 2024). Furthermore, ecological perspectives draw attention to the significance of avian species within broader environmental contexts, linking the use of bird-derived chromatic inspiration to discourses on sustainability, preservation, and cultural identity (Corbett et al., 2024). The ecological and cultural significance of the study lies in its engagement with the Niger Delta's avian biodiversity. By drawing attention to the chromatic richness of local bird species, the research underscores the value of indigenous ecological systems as sources of creative inspiration and environmental awareness. It highlights the importance of sustaining the region's fragile ecosystems, linking artistic inquiry to broader conversations on environmental preservation and cultural identity.

In the context of contemporary visual arts, the Niger Delta ecology provides visual resources for contemporary artistic innovation. This not only extends the boundaries of chromatic experimentation but also asserts the relevance of ecologically sensitive approaches in global studio-based exploration.

Objective of The Study

The objective of this study is to explore how avian-inspired chromatic appropriation can inform and transform visual styles and techniques within contemporary studio practice. Explore the chromatic diversity of selected tropical bird species from the Niger Delta as sources of visual inspiration. Appropriately translate avian chromatic features into studio-based painting processes, emphasizing experimentation with colour, materiality, and technique. To develop hybrid visual styles that move beyond naturalistic representation toward abstraction, symbolism, and new compositional frameworks.

Research Question

How can the appropriation of avian chromatics inform and transform visual styles and techniques within contemporary studio practice?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance in artistic, theoretical, and studio-based practices by positioning chromatic appropriation from avian sources as both a creative and critical process within contemporary studio practice. Artistically, it will advance knowledge in colour exploration and studio experimentation. By drawing inspiration from the chromatic systems of tropical bird species, the research contributes to expanding the expressive and technical vocabulary available to painters. The investigation of bird-derived hues, tonal harmonies, and surface textures encourages new modes of colour application, compositional balance, and visual rhythm that transcend conventional approaches to representation. In doing so, the project situates studio practice as a site for innovation where the translation of avian colour phenomena into pigment and surface treatment leads to hybrid aesthetic outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Studio practice

Studio practice has evolved beyond a mere site of art-making into a critical and reflective space for knowledge production. Within contemporary art research, the studio is now recognized as a laboratory of visual inquiry where practice, theory, and material experimentation converge to generate new epistemologies (Riley, 2025; Bolt, 2023). For the painter, it is not simply a workspace but a dynamic ecosystem where observation, reflection, and embodied engagement with materials become acts of research.

Riley (2025) argues that the studio functions as a “research instrument,” allowing the artist to document iterative processes such as pigment testing, compositional studies, and textural layering as forms of empirical evidence. Messer (2025) further contends that documenting the aesthetic evolution of works substantiates artistic experimentation as a rigorous and valid inquiry process within academia. This methodological framing legitimizes the processes undertaken in the production of *Forbidden Fruit*, *Hidden Identity*, and *Under the Shadow*, where each composition embodies successive cycles of exploration, reflection, and revision.

In contemporary art discourse, the studio is a site of ecological dialogue, linking the Niger Delta’s avian biodiversity with contemporary painterly strategies. In this way, the studio becomes both a physical and conceptual space, an ecology of colour, texture, and perception where knowledge is not only represented but materially produced.

Visual styles

Visual style in painting serves as the artist’s signature system of interpretation, where colour, composition become codified expressions of thought and emotion. Within the framework of chromatic appropriation, visual style is not static; it evolves through continuous negotiation between natural inspiration, material exploration, and conceptual intent (Riley, 2025; Bolt, 2023). The integration of avian chromatics into painting practice introduces a hybrid visual vocabulary, one that fuses biological aesthetics with artistic innovation to articulate ecological consciousness, sensory experience, and material transformation.

Recent discourse on visual styles in painting has shifted toward embodied perception and ecological sensitivity, emphasizing how artists translate natural phenomena into painterly language (Wijntjes, 2024; Kearney, 2024). Wijntjes (2024) proposes that the act of depiction is not mere representation but a perceptual reconstruction where the painter reconstructs how the eye perceives surface, hue, and luminosity. This idea is crucial to chromatic appropriation: in transposing avian hues, the artist does not copy feathers but reinterprets how those hues interact with light, space, and emotion.

The visual style emerging from such interpretation is dialogic; it reflects both an internalized observation of nature and an externalized articulation of identity and place (Ulvund, 2024). In the Niger Delta context, where biodiversity and environmental fragility coexist, these visual decisions

embody a form of cultural ecology. The painter becomes a mediator between the chromatic language of birds and the expressive needs of contemporary society.

In contemporary painting, visual style emerges as a negotiation between material agency and conceptual vision. Bolt (2023) describes this as material thinking the artist's ability to allow materials to "speak" within the process. Through layering, glazing, and texturing, pigments assume active roles in determining visual outcomes. This aligns with Jiménez-Desmond, Pozo-Antonio, and Arizzi's (2024) argument that colour reintegration is not merely a technical act but a conceptual one, where chromatic repair or translation carries interpretive meaning.

In your studio experiments, style develops from sustained engagement with material responses—how pigments refract under light, how transparent glazes produce optical vibration, or how textural relief captures shadow. *Hidden Identity* embodies this negotiation: the use of partially obscured chromatic fields and intermittent highlights creates an oscillation between visibility and erasure, mirroring avian camouflage strategies. This stylistic decision transforms avian observation into a metaphor for human identity and concealment.

Avian hues

Chromatic appropriation, particularly from avian inspiration, demands sensitivity to the physics of light, pigment layering, and surface texture. Avian colouration research reveals that hues arise through both pigmentary and structural coloration (Ke et al., 2024). Translating these natural mechanisms into studio practice involves experimentation with transparent glazes, iridescent mediums, and reflective grounds to simulate the multi-spectral interactions found in feathers.

The study of bird coloration, its structural, pigmentary, and behavioral dimensions, provides a rich framework for understanding how colour functions in nature and how it may be reinterpreted in painting. Birds' plumage embodies an extraordinary range of hues and optical effects, including iridescence, fluorescence, and interference, all of which result from complex microstructures within feathers (Eliason et al., 2024). Translating these phenomena into visual art involves not replication, but conceptual and material transposition, where light, texture, and pigment interact to evoke the dynamism of avian chromatics within the painterly field.

Avian hues also hold deep symbolic value across cultures. In African cosmologies, brightly coloured birds often symbolize transcendence, transformation, and the bridge between the physical and spiritual realms (Aremu, 2023). Within the Niger Delta, avian plumage has historically inspired textile and body art patterns, functioning as markers of identity and status. Appropriating these hues into contemporary painting extends this symbolic lineage, transforming natural motifs into vehicles of socio-cultural reflection. Artists draw from natural chromatics simply for aesthetic reasons. Within this ecological paradigm, avian hues become metaphors for biodiversity,

resilience, and adaptation qualities essential to rethinking the artist's relationship with the environment. Ultimately, avian hues in this study for the painter assumes the role of chromatic mediator, translating the iridescent language of birds into a human register of pigment, texture, and emotion.

Painting techniques

Painting techniques serve as the physical and conceptual mediators through which chromatic ideas are materialized in studio practice. This studio exploration, interfaced with glazing, layering, impasto, and textural manipulation, functions as a means of translating avian hues into tactile and optical experiences. This aligns with Bolt's (2023) notion of material thinking, where the artist allows the properties of pigment, binder, and surface to shape conceptual direction. In this context, painting becomes both a scientific inquiry and a poetic translation, an experiment in transforming the luminous language of birds into a human chromatic register.

This technique embodies what Faccio (2024) terms surface intelligence, a sensory knowledge embedded in material behavior. Layering remains one of the most significant strategies for achieving chromatic depth. Optical layering, achieved through transparent glazes, allows light to penetrate successive colour films, bounce off the substrate, and re-emerge, creating a sense of internal glow (Yuan & Chu, 2024). This technique parallels the structural coloration found in avian plumage, where multiple layers of keratin scatter light selectively to produce iridescent hues (Osorio & Vorobyev, 2024).

In contemporary studio research, painting technique transcends craftsmanship; it becomes a form of inquiry, a way of generating knowledge through making (Riley, 2025). Each gesture, brush mark, and chromatic layering constitutes an epistemic action, embodying both empirical observation and conceptual reflection. As Kearney (2024) notes, the integration of natural colour systems into painting challenges anthropocentric modes of representation by emphasizing interspecies resonance.

Recent studies in experimental painting (Liu et al., 2023; Sykes, 2024) show a resurgence of interest in cross-medium synthesis, where traditional techniques merge with contemporary materials such as pearlescent mica pigments, light-sensitive varnishes, and digital overlays. These innovations expand the expressive capacity of colour, enabling painters to achieve vibrancy akin to natural optical effects. Your studio experiments reflect this trajectory, particularly the integration of metallic underpainting and synthetic glazing mediums to evoke the shimmer of avian hues.

Ultimately, painting technique in this research embodies a chromatic ecology, a reciprocal exchange between observation, material behavior, and conceptual intent. Each technical choice, whether a glaze, a textural relief, or a pigment modulation, serves as a translation of avian chromatics into artistic language. Through this dialogue, painting becomes an act of ecological empathy: an attempt to experience and rearticulate the world's chromatic vitality through human gesture and material intelligence.

Avian Inspiration

The subject of avian inspiration in contemporary art extends beyond mere visual fascination with birds. It embodies an intricate dialogue between ecological awareness, chromatic symbolism, and material transformation. Birds, as both aesthetic subjects and ecological indicators, possess a dual significance: they represent the beauty of biodiversity and signal the fragility of ecosystems under threat (Maia & Eliason, 2024; Osorio & Vorobyev, 2024). In this context, avian inspiration in painting becomes an act of environmental reflection, a visual meditation on the interdependence of life forms, light, and colour.

Avian imagery has long served as a metaphor for transcendence, freedom, and transformation, yet in contemporary practice, it acquires an ecological dimension. Birds function as both visual and conceptual mediators between humanity and the natural world (Kearney, 2024). Within studio practice, this inspiration manifests not as a literal depiction but as chromatic abstraction, translating the vibrancy, movement, and optical complexity of bird plumage into layered colour harmonies and textural rhythms.

In *Forbidden Fruit*, for instance, the radiance of tropical avian feathers informs the painting's luminous palette, scarlet, magenta, and reflective violet tones that echo the courtship displays of sunbirds and kingfishers. The resulting composition mirrors what Eliason et al. (2024) describe as structural iridescence, achieved through pigment layering that captures fluctuating light intensities. Conversely, *Under the Shadow* derives inspiration from the subtle hues of forest-dwelling birds, where darkness, depth, and shadow interplay to evoke concealment and protection.

By appropriating avian colour systems, the approach views colour not merely as pigment but as a reflection of environmental adaptation and biological evolution practice, which engages with ecological consciousness, transforming bird hues into a distinct ecological narrative. *Hidden Identity* references camouflage species such as the African cuckoo, whose muted plumage mirrors its habitat for protection. Through layered tonalities and partially obscured forms, the work visualizes the tension between visibility and disappearance, an aesthetic that resonates with the ecological strategies of concealment. The chromatic structure thus serves as both an homage to avian adaptation and a commentary on human identity within environmental fragility.

Ultimately, avian inspiration functions as a creative and epistemic bridge linking nature's chromatic intelligence to artistic materiality. Through your paintings, avian hues are not merely admired but reimagined; they become part of an evolving dialogue between the natural and the human-made. This process situates your work within the growing field of eco-aesthetic painting, where art functions as both a visual and ethical response to environmental complexity.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a practice-led research methodology, situating the studio as a primary site of inquiry and knowledge production (Westermann, 2024; Li & Zhang, 2025). Within this framework, artistic practice is not merely illustrative but constitutes a core method of investigation. The creative process itself, comprising observation, experimentation, material manipulation, and

reflective analysis, becomes the means through which understanding of chromatic appropriation and avian-inspired visual strategies is generated.

Primary visual data include sketches, digital photographs, and colour studies of selected bird species. Field observations were complemented by secondary data sources such as ornithological texts and photographic archives to ensure accurate chromatic representation. Studio processes were meticulously documented through process journals, reflective notes, and photographic records of each experimental stage. These materials serve both as research data and as artefacts of inquiry.



Figure 1: Tejuoso Patience Enifome, “Sketch of *Hidden Identity*” Acrylic on canvas, 2025

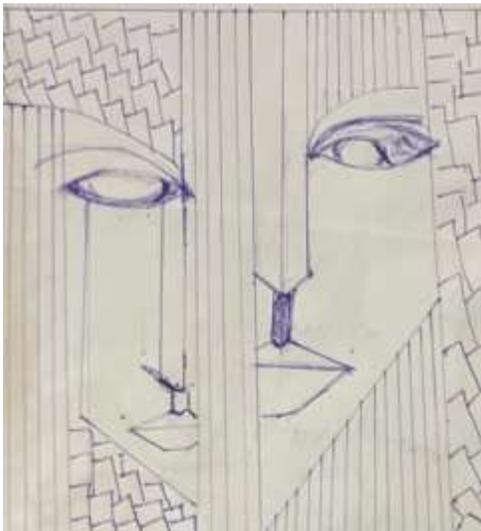


Figure 2: Tejuoso Patience Enifome, “Sketch of *Under the Shadow*,” Acrylic on canvas, 2025

Focused on exploring the translation of avian chromatics into paint and surface. Experiments involved analyzing feather hues, tonal gradations to develop new palettes, and layering style and techniques. Various media, including acrylic, oil, and mixed-media pigments, were tested to reproduce iridescent and luminescent effects reminiscent of avian plumage.



Figure 3: Melissa James, "Night Heron" (Nycticorax nycticoax), 2016



Figure 4: Danny Ye, "Great Blue Turaco" (Corythaeola cristata) 2025.



Figure 5: Neil Wasserman, Northern Flicker, Birds of Colorado (Colaptes auratus) Dec 2023

Engaging the three stages of production. The first stage of the creative process entails observation and identification of avian as seen in figures 1 & 2, pigment selection and palette analysis as seen in figures 3 & 4, sketches and colour thoughts. The second stage entails production, while the third stage is the studio outcome as seen in figures 5 & 6; all of this becomes the means through which understanding of chromatic appropriation and avian-inspired visual strategies is generated. Structured around reiterative cycles of studio experimentation, documentation, and critical reflection. Each cycle involves the selection of avian species from the Niger Delta region, observation and analysis of their chromatic and textural features, translation of these visual elements into pigment-based studies, and evaluation of the resulting outcomes. This cyclical process allows for continuous refinement of style and techniques, aligning with the practice-led model where knowledge emerges through doing and reflecting.

4. Analysis of Studio Outcomes

The analytical framework for this study is anchored in a studio-based exploration of chromatic appropriation derived from selected tropical bird species of the Niger Delta. The studio functioned as a place for experimentation, exploration, translation, and reflection, where colour systems observed in avian plumage were reimagined through painterly processes. Each artwork represents a distinct phase in the research line of evolved negotiation between observation, abstraction, and interpretation. The outcomes “*Hidden Identity*” as seen in figure 6 and “*Under the Shadow*” as seen in figure 7 collectively embody the visual and conceptual synthesis achieved through this chromatic inquiry.



Figure 6: Tejuoso Patience Enifome, “*Hidden Identity*” Acrylic on canvas, 2025

The second work, *Hidden Identity*, advances the chromatic research through an emphasis on pattern, texture, and concealment. Drawing inspiration from the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) and Speckled Turaco (*Colaptes auratus*) and Northern Flicker, Birds of Colorado (*Colaptes auratus*) as seen in figure 6, the piece investigates how avian plumage functions simultaneously as camouflage and display. Layered brushwork and textured impasto simulating the tactile complexity of feathers, while muted greys and punctuating reds articulate the paradox of visibility and disguise. The process incorporated experimental tools, palette knives, textured rollers, and scraping methods to produce tactile depth that shifts under varying light. Thematically, *Hidden Identity* reflects on notions of masking and self-representation, aligning biological adaptation with social and psychological concealment. The chromatic subtleties observed in the avian models thus become metaphors for identity negotiation in human contexts.



Figure 7: Tejuoso Patience Enifome, “*Under the Shadow*” Acrylic on canvas, 2025

The painting, *Under the Shadow*, synthesizes lessons from earlier experiments into a mature expression of chromatic and conceptual resolution. Inspired by the Great Blue Turaco (*Corythaeola cristata*) and Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticoax*), as seen in figures 3 & 4, the painting explores tonal contrast and symbolic depth through a darker, more subdued palette. Deep indigos, violets, and muted ochres dominate the composition, conveying both serenity and foreboding. Layering and scumbling techniques were employed to create atmospheric depth, with subtle iridescent accents emerging only under angled light, suggesting the transient luminosity of feathers in shade. Conceptually, *Under the Shadow* reflects on ecological fragility and the vulnerability of both natural and human existences within unstable environments. The work thus extends chromatic appropriation into a poetic commentary on survival and transformation.

5. Findings

Findings from the study indicate that avian-inspired colour systems provide fertile ground for experimentation in painting, enabling the creation of hybrid visual languages that merge observation, abstraction, and emotion. The reflective documentation process confirmed that the studio functions not only as a space for artistic production but also as a site of critical inquiry and knowledge generation. Moreover, the research underscores the ecological and cultural significance of sourcing visual inspiration from the Niger Delta’s biodiversity, advocating for a sustainable and contextually rooted approach to contemporary art-making.

Across the two works, the research demonstrates how avian chromatic systems characterized by iridescence, gradation, and textural variation can be reinterpreted to produce new visual styles and technical vocabularies within painting. The iterative process of observing, translating, and reflecting yielded insights into the relational dynamics between colour, light, and surface. Moreover, the metaphorical dimensions embedded in each work reveal the potential of chromatic appropriation to operate as both a formal and conceptual strategy.

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the creative and theoretical potential of chromatic appropriation from avian sources as a catalyst for developing new visual styles and techniques in contemporary studio practice. Through a practice-led approach, the research explored how the vibrant colours observed in the plumage of selected tropical birds from the Niger Delta could be reinterpreted within painting. The process was guided by iterative experimentation, critical reflection, and conceptual analysis, allowing knowledge to emerge through the act of creating.

The two studio outcomes, “Forbidden Fruit” and “Hidden Identity,” served as case studies demonstrating the progressive evolution of chromatic and thematic exploration. Hidden Identity expanded the investigation to include pattern, texture, and concealment, while Under the Shadow integrated tonal depth and conceptual reflection on fragility and transformation. Collectively, these works revealed how natural chromatic phenomena could be translated into expressive painterly vocabularies that engage both visual and symbolic dimensions.

Overall, this methodology integrates creative experimentation, critical reflection, and contextual awareness to examine how avian-inspired chromatic systems can be appropriated within contemporary studio practice. Through this process, the study positions the artist-researcher as both maker and theorist, using the language of painting to articulate new insights into appropriation from nature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that chromatic appropriation, when approached reflexively and ethically, expands the expressive possibilities of colour in painting while contributing to broader discourses on ecology, materiality, and identity in contemporary visual art. The outcomes affirm that artistic practice can operate as a rigorous mode of research, one capable of transforming natural phenomena into visual metaphors that speak to both environmental awareness and human experience.

The act of transforming avian chromatic systems into studio-based expressions facilitated a deeper understanding that chromatic appropriation from avian inspiration can inform and transform visual styles and techniques within contemporary studio practice. Through a practice-led methodology grounded in observation, experimentation, and reflection, the research demonstrates that colour derived from tropical bird species can serve as powerful catalysts for artistic innovation.

Contribution to Knowledge

The production of the studio works, *Hidden Identity*, and *Under the Shadow* constitutes a tangible contribution to artistic knowledge. Each piece operates as both artefact and research evidence, embodying the theoretical principles explored and offering new vocabularies of texture, layering, and luminosity within chromatic expression.

This study contributes original knowledge to the fields of contemporary studio practice, chromatic theory, and art-based research by positioning avian-derived colour systems as both a methodological and conceptual framework for creative inquiry.

The research demonstrates how colour, pattern, and texture observed in the plumage of tropical bird species can be systematically appropriated, reinterpreted, and transformed into new modes of painterly expression.

Through iterative studio experimentation, it advances the discourse on practice-led methodologies, showing that visual exploration can yield theoretical insight equal in value to textual analysis.

The research expands the dialogue between art and ecology, positioning the Niger Delta's biodiversity as a wellspring for sustainable visual innovation. By translating avian chromatics into painting, the study foregrounds the ecological significance of artistic inspiration and encourages environmentally sensitive creative practices. In doing so, it situates artistic inquiry within a wider discourse on conservation and cultural identity.

It expands the understanding of colour appropriation by foregrounding the potential of avian chromatics as a resource for visual and technical innovation in studio practice. Demonstrating the capacity of practice-led research to generate theoretical insights that bridge artistic experimentation with critical discourse.

Recommendation

From the research, it is recommended that future studies on the expansion of chromatic experimentation to a broader range of bird species beyond those examined in this research should be incorporated for comparative studies of plumage coloration across ecological zones.

Additionally, scientific collaborations with ornithologists or materials scientists could deepen insights into the structural and optical mechanisms that produce avian pigmentation, offering new strategies for colour palette formulation.

Building on material exploration and Innovation, subsequent research could explore alternative sustainable materials, such as natural pigments, to align chromatic experimentation embedded in the concept of avian inspiration for artistic practice.

Further research might also examine how avian-inspired works can be contextualized within exhibitions, educational programs, and community art initiatives in the Niger Delta and beyond. Such engagement would promote environmental awareness and cultural dialogue, situating art as a medium for ecological education and cultural preservation.

Finally, additional scholarly inquiry could focus on deepening theoretical perspectives on appropriation, which would further illuminate the intersections between ecology, aesthetics, and creative identity.

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THE SEMANTICS OF NELSON EDEWOR'S *THE CHILD MUST BE KING*

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Abstract

Shrine-like installations before a large body of viewers are often a puzzle to many. Moreso, many rarely see them as works of art, especially due to their awe-inspiring nature. This paper focuses on the 2004 Installation, *The Child Must Be King*, by Nelson Edewor. The aim is to create an understanding of the meaning of the work. Thus, through the visible and tangible elements in the work, and its correlation as signs, symbols, and pointers, the paper adopts a descriptive approach coupled with the semiotic method. Interviews were conducted with the artist in addition to library and online sources utilized in the process of studying the work. Apart from possessing strong characteristics of art, and the Niger Delta traditional shrine installations, the work breeds some complexities and exhibits certain predictive and prophetic ambience concerning the turn of events in the present day Nigeria. The installation – ‘*The Child Must Be King*’, also has certain ritual connotations that links it to the poem ‘*Viaticum*’ by Senegalese poet and storyteller Birago Diop.

Keywords: Work of art; Shrine; Semantic, Environmental Aesthetics; Nelson Edewor; Prophecy; Viaticum.

Introduction

A work of art is a product brought into existence by a producer through a process, with an intent or purpose. This product is often closely related to a historical context. In the view of Frederick Hartt (1985:13), the term ‘art’ derives from a Latin word that suggests ‘skill, way, or method’. Hartt’s Latin pointer emphasizes a producer/process. He also notes that the term has taken on the requirement of aesthetic appreciation as distinguished from the utility as its principal characteristic in most societies. Whichever way, this opinion is viewed, whether from a utilitarian or perceptual standpoint, it suggests intent or purpose and the observer. Hartt goes further to subscribe to John Dewey’s view that ‘all of the human experience, beautiful and ugly, pleasurable and painful, even humorous and absurd, can be distilled by the artist, crystallized in a work of art, and preserved to be experienced by the observer as long as that work lasts’. Dewey’s explanation, in Hartt, does not only suggest what may constitute art, it also indicates, among other things, a source of inspiration for the artist, the artistic process, the ultimate artwork, and the observer’s interaction with it. This ability to embrace the human experience of all sorts and transmit it to the observer, according to Hartt, (1985) distinguishes the work of art. Regarding the experiences embodied in an artwork, Hartt queries: whose experiences? He then submits that the artwork inevitably ‘includes some

reference to the artist's existence, but often even more to the time in which he or she lived' (1985:14).

In the same vein, Osa Dennis Egonwa (2007), p. 2, believes that 'the arrangement of an experience or experiences via the numerous media of the visual arts by the sentient personality called artist, is for both self and others; and may represent well-known or unknown features'. This view, expressing the historical perspective of the artwork, is in tandem with Abel Mac Diakparomre's (interview, 14 March 2005) assertion that art is a purposive human activity with the intent of eliciting an aesthetic response. Elsewhere, he opines that the product of this activity must, in addition, be perceptible and tangible, and concludes that the 'definition of art is impacted by the subject itself, social and religious environment, creative awareness and the perception of individuals and social group' (Diakparomre, 2019:1).

Shrine and a work of Art

Like a work of art, a shrine has social and religious aspects. These aspects represent the experience(s) of the devotee. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, and especially in traditional settlements, up to modern, such as Benin City, Warri, and their surrounding cities, towns, and villages, shrines are ubiquitous – in and around houses, trees, groves, and riversides. Even in modern societies, different types of shrines have emerged for different religious purposes. A shrine tends to captivate the interests of worshippers. Similarly, an expressive work of art can captivate an observer's interest and command his attention in an awe-inspiring manner. Visual artists know this and often explore such elements that can create similitude of shrine or altar experiences in their artworks, especially installations. Amongst such visual artists from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Bruce Onobrakpeya (b. 1932) and Nelson Edewor (b. 1970) stand out. Bruce Onobrakpeya's *Shrine* set and *Akporode* are both shrine-like installations that have been exposed to a large body of viewers. Both installations anticipated this awe-inspiring appeal. Nelson Edewor's *The Child Must be King*, while adopting the same awe-inspiring character, breeds an obfuscation of the artist's intent and keeps observers guessing where to place it – a work of art or shrine or a bigger puzzle – an oracle? To comprehend the meaning of the work, *The Child Must be King*, we may need to look at artworks in traditional shrines and artworks in modern church altars.

Artworks in Traditional Shrines

Apart from draped palm fronds or raffia, mud or brass sculptures, decorated or incised calabashes, brass bells or ferrous metal gongs, installation of stones of varied sizes, wood sculptures, and carved wood representing canoes and seamen, which make a traditional Niger Delta shrine a complex installation and a work of art, there are other accoutrements like iron and/or brass implements which further contribute to the shrine's complexity and aesthetics. Background coloration and decoration, or shrine environmental aesthetics, is one art genre that practitioners of religion carry out as part of their services to deities. This form of art is present in almost every shrine(see figures 1&2).

Another aspect where the seeming knowledge of art plays an important role in the enhancement of the shrine aesthetic environment is the arrangement of *Ukhure* (ancestral staff) in the Edo family ancestral altars of Benin city. *Ukhure* is usually arranged vertically against the wall on a raised pavement. The tallest of these are usually situated in the middle, and the others of less height are carefully arranged around them, on both sides, to form a layout. Although there is no compulsion to have this triangular layout, it has become a subconsciously imbibed cultural attribute, and hence many Edo families that still have this type of ancestral altar arrange the *Ukhure* in the ancestral altars to take a roughly triangular layout with the *Ada* and *Eben* (ceremonial swords) flanking the installation on both sides. The arrangement presented in Ben-Amos and Rubin (1983, p.16) “Figure 3: Royal Altars, Benin City, 1966” alludes to this.

Artworks in Modern Church Altars

It has been mentioned above that in traditional usage, the place for the veneration of deities is called a shrine. But this, it would seem, does not apply only to traditional religious practices but also to foreign religious beliefs that ultimately find adherents in places other than their places of origin. To this end, part of the architecture of the Christian Church building; being a place for the veneration of the Almighty God; passes for a shrine. Within the church hall, is a raised and secluded platform which is referred to as the Sanctuary. The most prominent and perhaps the most important item in this sanctuary is the altar (**Figure 3, 6, 8 and 9**). Modern churches in the Niger Delta use metal and, sometimes marble or wooden railings to mark out the sanctuaries, barring the altars from the larger church halls (figures 6&7). These railings are usually designed and fabricated by artists or artisans. The backgrounds of many of the altars of Orthodox churches are usually decorated with artworks such as crucifixes (figure 3). Also, on the altar tables, can be found, an agglomeration of ritual paraphernalia associated with Christian religious worship.

In contrast to the orthodox churches, most churches of the Pentecostal family (**Figures 3-9**) in the Niger Delta employ artforms different from stained glass and religious subjects. Here, carefully modeled draperies of fabrics in varied textures, forms, and colors are embellished with an assortment of flowers, and occasionally, texts (from Bible passages) accompany the composition. These ‘new’ artforms transform modern church altars, into aesthetically satisfying works of art and awe-inspiring places of worship. The decorative art, together with other religious paraphernalia, create a serene atmosphere, and put the worshippers in the mood of worship.

The Artist, Nelson Edewor

Nelson Edewor (b. 1970), teaches sculpture, drawing, art history, and entrepreneurial courses in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. He is from the *Isoko* cultural area of Delta State, Niger Delta, Nigeria. He graduated with a master's degree (M.F.A. in Sculpture) 1999 from the University of Benin, Benin City. In 2006 and 2009 he bagged an M.A and a Ph.D. in art history respectively from the Delta State University, Abraka (Bazunu 2006), and (Dynamic Horizon 2016). Edewor is a 2012 postdoctoral fellow of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He is also an ordained priest of the Anglican order of the Christian faith. He has served on the executive committees of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) both at the

National and Delta State levels from 2008 to 2014. After he was promoted professor in 2018, he served as Director, Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies, Delta State University, Abraka from 2018 to 2022. He was the National President (2021 to 2024) of the Sculptors' Association of Nigeria (ScAN). Looking at the life of Nelson Edewor, one can safely say that the work, *The Child Must be King* somehow reflects the artist's personal growth- a boy, young adult, and a full grown man. Edewor has risen steadily through the rungs on the professional, religious and social ladder.

Edewor, as a visual artist, works mainly in wood, especially teak, which grows as part of the Niger Delta evergreen vegetation. He embellishes his carvings with iron, aluminum plates, brasses, and mirrors. Other embellishments that can be seen on his woodwork are raffias, jute fibers, marine ropes, pieces of clothes, and pigments of varied hues, (Bazunu 2010, 2022). Most of Edewor's sculptures and installations, (produced between 1999 and 2013), thematically address the plight of the Niger Delta peoples concerning oil exploitation. In some of his works, the concept of trinity also finds a vent. Stylistically, his visuals express a blend of traditional and modern tendencies. Apart from sculptures, he produces drawings, paintings, and bush furniture (sculpture-like furniture) that pass more for artworks than pieces of utilitarian sofas (Bazunu 2010). In an earlier study, Bazunu (2006) classified Edewor's visuals into Pipe and robot-like constructions, Figurative sculptures, Material-suggestive forms, and Installation. *The Child Must Be King*, the focus of this paper, is one of Nelson Edewor's installation sculptures.

Description of the work

The installation, *The Child Must be King* is an agglomeration of objects such as machine parts, wood, raffia fibers, metal pipes, and brass bells. Others are basket trays, calabashes, cowries, beads, and stains of red and white pigments. These content-revealing objects are similar to the types of objects that may be found in any typical shrine set up for the practice of traditional African religion in the Niger Delta. Just like in the traditional religious shrine, these objects that constitute the installation makes for an obfuscation of the artist's intent. 'Installation secures its art identity by the instrumentality of significant content-revealing objects capable of sustaining visual and cerebral interest' opines Egonwa (2004, p.2).

The work is a composition of three sticks, organized in a tripod arrangement. The organization of the two sticks at the anterior view makes them meet the third, from the posterior end, at a point that bears semblance to the shoulders of a human figure. It gives the impression of a figure standing astride with two outstretched arms, the shoulders bend downward and the trunk fully stretched at the rear. Slightly below the perceived shoulders are three shorter pieces of the stick connected triangularly in a horizontal format, from which strands of raffia hang down loosely. These sticks brace the upper part of the tripod on all three sides. Below the raffia-draped shoulders are two branches of the frontal sticks, carefully aligned downwards and crossing each other (See **figures 10&11**) to give the impression of two swords positioned for defense.

Around the middle of the obliquely-positioned sticks that form the tripod are two pieces of the stick that brace the two frontal posts to the one behind. The two pieces of stick reinforce the wide-spread 'legs' of the figure. Under the braces, is a large metal sculpture measuring about 85cm in height that is made from a 12.5cm diameter pipe. This piece of sculpture is adorned with beads

and is seated on a circular basket tray. The metal sculpture, representing a human figure – the child in the composition – is seated in an *Okidiagbara* (aristocratic) pose, consonant to the posture idioms of the Urhobo and frequently expressed in some *Iphri* (figures of male aggression), and the mud sculptures of the Niger Delta region.

The seated metal figure is situated in what looks like a triangularly protected hut, shielded with raffia on two sides, and a threshold on the third side. On the network that links the braces above the metal sculpture (**Figure 11**), lies a smaller basket tray, upon which are mounted two semi-circular calabashes; one partially covering the other and revealing a rough-bodied gourd as the content of the slightly opened receptacle. Cowry shells and brass bells are also contained in the half-opened calabash. Directly under the smaller basket tray is situated a small fish trap, with the entrance slightly facing upward. To the right of the picture plane, in-between the fish trap and the head of the seated metal figure is located another, smaller calabash with a white circle and dark spot in its centre (**Figure 10**). A division of this installation into formal components yields three sections: the bottom section where the metal sculpture is located; the middle section in which the cowries, calabashes on a basket tray, and brass bells can be seen; and the upper section that is akin to the head and shoulders of a human figure.

Interpretation of the Installation

The first impression conveyed by this three-dimensional installation is that it is a shrine, given the aforementioned characterizing features of a shrine, and especially with the agglomeration of objects that are commonly used and found in traditional religious shrines in the Delta region of Nigeria. This probably explains why the *Omù* of Asaba, (a well-known and respected traditional-religion believer in Asaba; the Delta state capital), paid what may be described as a religious salutation, to this artwork at an exhibition in 2004 at Nelrose Hotel Asaba. On encountering this artwork, the *Omù* lifted her right arm and stretched it, three times towards the installation, in the traditional manner of paying homage to a deity or ruler. This action puzzled many viewers at the exhibition, and some of them remarked: “This idolatress is venerating the sculpture as though it were an idol or a deity”. But the Wise men in biblical narrative from the account of Matthew chapter 2 verses 1-2 and 9-11, did nothing less in the case of the infant Jesus. They had seen his star and went to worship him.

From the description above, the installation is imbued with many signs. Each of the three sides of this tripodal artwork presents a triangular layout and the three points of contact by the pods with the ground present yet another triangle. The cylindrical shape of the sticks and their calibrations reflect petroleum oil pipes with their joints. This is further accentuated by the pipes used for the construction of the metal sculpture over which the tripod strides. The different sections – the bottom, middle, and top – may represent the earth, the atmosphere, and the heavens respectively. As perceived in this installation, the triangular form or tripod becomes indicative of many things. In the view of Egonwa, (2004), it echoes ‘stability’. This is in tandem with the Edo proverb that says *Ikewu eha ne muẹ evbare kua*, which translates as ‘tripodal cooking stands do not spill food’. It suggests ‘strength’, as corroborated in the biblical threefold cord that is not easily broken (Eccl. 4:12); and is also evocative of the Niger Delta, as expressed in one of Edewor’s

(1998) early cement sculptures titled ‘Abundance’. The raffia strands highlight seclusion, being set apart, protected, and sanctified when interpreted through traditional canons, compare (**Figure 1**): Madam Oghobaghase’s shrine, veiled with palm fronds.

Traditionally, basket trays are used for the display of wares in marketplaces. They go out filled with sellers’ wares and return filled with buyers’ money. The basket tray here appears suggestive of ballot boxes that go out hypothetically ‘filled’ with contestants’ ideologies, promises, and manifestos, and return filled with cast votes. The seated metal sculpture piece being made from pipes implies that the spirit that dwells in the figure is the aspirations or desires of the people from the ‘piped region’ – the Niger Delta, whose destinies appear either to have been starved away in or transported through oil pipelines and sold around the world. The beads bedecking the neck of the figure are a status symbol which implies that royalty, kingship, power, authority, and enthronement were about to smile at the people that the sculpture represents. The calabash signifies a receptacle for sustenance in time of need. The rough-bodied gourd called *Ukokoghọ nọ fiẹ ‘rọn* in the Edo language is used for powerful defensive and offensive charms intended to intimidate an enemy or opponent. An opponent, seeing the rough-bodied gourd, gets frightened and runs away, for fear of being plagued or infested with boils that are believed to emanate from the gourd. This way, the bearer of the gourd gets protected from whatever harm the opponent or enemy may have planned. Powdery charms preserved in rough-bodied gourd are potent, and also believed to create obstacles or stumbling blocks in an opponent’s or enemy’s way when the charms are blown into the air, especially towards the enemy’s direction, says Madam Oghobaghase (personal communication, 2016). In this Installation, the calabashes, small-fish trap, cowries, and raffia are emblematic of the ritual that may be envisaged in a shrine. Cowries, being previously used traditionally as a medium of exchange, speak of money, and point to wealth. Brass bells refer to announcement, likened to the sound of sirens that precedes a president’s arrival and announces his presence.

A triangle is analogous to the number ‘3’ which is a magic number. And being within the triangle created by the tri-pods of the composition implied some form of protection for the figure (the child) within the tripod. For the child to be king, the mother, father, and the community, here represented by the three stems of the tripod, are standing firmly, and solidly with him. From a Christian perspective, God-the-father, God-the-Son, and God-the-Holy Spirit is believed also to be standing firmly in support. Similarly, the forces underground – represented by the triangle of the tripod’s physical contact with the ground, the forces on land – represented by the lower half of the visual, and the forces of the air above – represented by the upper half of the composition, are implied to be in support. In effect, this child, it would appear, is being *viaticumised* for a great task ahead. A child born of the Niger Delta triangle, in whose veins the ‘triangulated blood’ flows, and whose destiny had been starved away in oil pipelines, ‘must be king’ someday, according to this installation by Nelson Edewor. A child’s voice is a minority among those who claim to be elders. Similarly, UNDP (2006) points out that the Niger Delta peoples are considered a minority in Nigeria. For a child of the minority Niger Delta origin to be ‘king’ of Nigeria, prayers, supplications, and sacrifices have had to be made long before he emerges on the scene. Perhaps mother has had to dip “three fingers of her left hand...” opines Birago Diop in Donatus Ibe Nwoga

(ed.), (1967:107). And when it happens, whether be it a king or president, he/she needs security. This points to the symbolism of **the fish trap** mounted at the top of the bottom section, above the head of the metal sculpture piece, and slightly below the middle section of the composition. In riverine areas of the Niger Delta, fish traps are used to catch fish for subsistence and economic purposes. However, in traditional religion, small fish traps, like the one in this composition, are usually tied at the entrance of houses, or communities for protective ritual purposes, and are believed to trap evil, negative forces, and demonic spirits, and prevent them from gaining entry into the settlements. Okpu (2001, p.17) concurs that

...small products such as traditional mats, trays, and fishing traps are used as protective and defensive mechanisms. Usually, these objects are tied on a piece of wood or stringed across the entrance to a compound; the wood or string is held in position by two posts dug into the ground and standing on opposite sides of the entrance. The accoutrements are believed to have the power to protect believers from witch-hunting and frequent deaths of children in the family or compound.

As a pointer in this installation, it serves as a form of protection for the child who must be king. In this regard, the actions of security agents attached to presidential entourages easily come to mind. One may recall that on October 1st, 2010, about eight months into Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's presidency, two car bombs exploded on Shehu Shagari way, near the new complex of the federal high court in Abuja. Indeed, the title of this three-dimensional installation, "The Child Must be King" expresses a futuristic desire when it was created in 2004, which materialized when Goodluck Jonathan from the Niger Delta became president. It is still a projection, an expectation, anticipation, and a persisting prophecy of more to come. This explains why, Bazunu (2012), in his doctoral thesis titled 'Semiotic Elements in Selected Artworks on the Niger Delta', classified *The Child Must be King* under 'Visuals of Prediction and Hope'.

The Child Must be King* and its Relationship of the poem, *Viaticum

Indeed, for a full comprehension of Edewor's *The Child Must be King*, it may also need to be viewed through the prism of Birago Diop's (b. 1906) poem, *Viaticum*:

In one of the three jugs
 The three jugs where on certain evenings return
 the tranquil souls, ...
 Mother has dipped three fingers
 three fingers of her left hand:
 thumb, forefinger and middle finger ...
 With her three fingers red with blood,
 with dog's blood,
 with bull's blood,
 with goat's blood,
 Mother has touched me three times ...
 Mother said: 'Go through the world, go
 in Life. They will follow thy traces.'

Since then I go...

before me advance the breaths of the forefathers. [Birago Diop in Nwoga (ed.) (1967), Pp.107-8].

The resonance of 'three' in both Diop's *Viaticum* and Edewor's *The Child Must be King* is at a high pitch. In *Viaticum*, we read of: 'three jugs'; 'three fingers' – thumb, forefinger, and middle finger; 'three animals' blood – 'dog's blood', 'bull's blood' and 'goat's blood'; 'touched me three times; (touched three parts of the body – 'forehead', 'left breast' and 'navel'); and other references to 'three' which pervade the poem. In *the Child must be King*, we see three sticks forming a tripod; three triangles; three calabashes; three basket trays; three sides; three planes of reference; three points of contact; three sections/layers – bottom, middle and top. The poem *Viaticum* is child-centered: the sacrifices/rituals are for the protection and advancement of the child who is about to embark on a mission. He also narrates the ritual experiences. In Edewor's visual, we see the entire tripod installation erected for a covering over and around, the metal sculpture, which the artist calls 'The Child'. The visual is appropriately titled to reflect child-centeredness.

It will seem, therefore, that Edewor studied Birago Diop's poem, *Viaticum* before producing the metal sculpture representing the child and the entire installation because it seems a visual treatise of the poem. Edewor was asked about the relationship between his 2004 installation *The Child Must be King* and Birago Diop's poem, *Viaticum*. His response was 'Yes! I studied the poem as a college boy to pass my exams, but it was not directly in my consciousness while producing the sculpture ...it is possible that the poem was in my subconscious' he said in my interview with him at his New Dawn Studios, Abraka in September 16th, 2011.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, one can conclude that Nelson Edewor's Installation, *The Child Must be King*, is aesthetic as much as a prophetic work of art, strongly influenced by the artist's cultural and environmental background. One can also see from this paper that, the signs and symbols perceived in the installation are probable visual illustration of Birago Diop's poem *Viaticum*, and an expression of his ambition.

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Figures



Figure 1: Madam Iyayi Oghobaghase's Songo shrine, veiled with palm fronds. The veiling she says prevents un-invited entrants and creates an air of seclusion, being set apart and screened, or holiness for the deity. **Photo credit:** the author.

Figure 2: Madam Iyayi Oghobaghase's Songo shrine unveiled. Note the wall adornment of dots, and vertical and diagonal lines in red, white, and black. Even the accoutrements like calabashes, stones, and a stool are also painted to make the installation uniform. **Photo credit:** the author.



Figure 3: Sanctuary at Saint Paul's Catholic Church, Abraka. Of interest are the metal railings, draped inner altar, stained glass window, and crucifix at the top background. **Photo credit:** the author. **Figure 4:** Detail of Stained Glass background window.



Figure 5: Detail of a painting of Christian religious subject 'The Last Supper' in Figures 3 and 4.



Figure 6: Sanctuary at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Abraka; Note the metal railings; an inner altar aesthetically modeled with draped fabric, flanked by two potted plants; and a Crucifix in the background. **Photo credit:** the author.



Figure 7: An Altar raised in honor of the Virgin Mary behind metal railings, topped with wooden hand-rest. Location: Sacred Heart Catholic Church Abraka, Delta State Nigeria. Of note in this visual is the aesthetic configuration of drapes and arrangement of flowers by an artist (in the background, putting finishing touches to the composition); and a devotee making supplication in the foreground. Like in traditional shrines, there is an extent to which supplicants may advance. In the shrine above, the metal railings seem to express that limit. In this illustration, all the elements that make up the composition (the sculpture, raised platform, assorted flowers, and configuration of draped fabrics) have somewhat transformed the arrangement into an installation of a sort. **Photo credit:** the author.



Figure 8: The Sanctuary of Draped-Fabric background Altar of a Pentecostal Church in Abraka. Note the elevated pavement, a glass pulpit in the middle distance, a potted plant on the left of the picture, and the background-central pattern's allusion to the cross. Location: Living Faith Church Abraka, Delta State Nigeria. **Photo credit:** the author.



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Figure 9: An Altar with Draped-Fabric background at an Inter-Denominational Pentecostal Church in Abraka. Note the semi-circular, elevated four-step pavement, and potted plants on the flanks and centre of the altar, where the marble pulpit is located. Of note also are five leather-cased cushions on which worshippers may kneel and usually do not go beyond while being prayed for by the priests. Location: Our Saviour's Chapel, Abraka. **Photo credit:** the author.

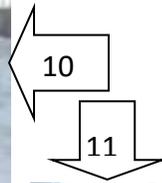


Figure 10: Nelson Edewor *The Child Must Be King* (2004). Sculpture, Installation/mixed media. Location: Niger Delta Cultural Centre, Agbarha-Otor. **Photo credit:** the author. **Figure 11:** Detail of *The Child Must be King*. **Photo credit:** the author.

**SULAIMAN DAUDA ISHOLA'S EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUES,
MEDIUM AND STYLE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH
ELANATSUI, YINKA SHONIBARE AND PEJU ALATISE**

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Abstract

This paper examines the innovative contributions of Sulaiman Dauda Ishola to the contemporary art practice with focus on painting in Africa through his distinctive techniques of Drop-Pico and Crack-Kico, his style of Squiggle-ism and his medium of PAPCRAY. This study situates his experimental methods within the broader framework of African modernist aesthetic artists. The study compares his art practice with the internationally recognized approaches of El Anatsui, Yinka Shonibare and Peju Alatise. The analysis highlights his unique synthesis of material experimentation, process, philosophy and African spiritual consciousness, which collectively position his work as a vital contribution to the evolving discourse of global contemporary art. In process of this vital research in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), prominent literature, knowledge, skills and practice were concisely reviewed for record purpose; the method of Comparative Analysis (CA) adopted was properly conducted, analyzed and interpreted. Conclusion was drawn with relevant recommendations.

Key Words: Drop-Pico, Crack-Kico, Squiggle-ism, PAPCRAY and Philosophy

Introduction

It is better said that the Contemporary African Art Practice (CAAP) has increasingly become defined by its material inventiveness, conceptual depth and negotiation between local identity and global discourse. Within this field, of research studies, Sulaiman Dauda Ishola emerges as an innovative figure whose experimental painting medium: PAPACRAY, techniques: Drop-Pico and Crack-Kico and style: Squiggle-ism has articulated a distinctly African philosophy of creativities. His methods prioritize process, texture and spiritual symbolism reflecting an aesthetic appreciation that both converses with and

departs from the formal traditions of Western abstraction and conventional art practice (Afolabi, 2025).

This study contextualizes his contributions in relation to El Anatsui, Yinka Shonibare and Peju Alatise; the three prominent African contemporary artists whose works exemplify material transformation, cultural hybridist and narrative symbolism respectively.

According to Afolabi, (2025):

In recent times, the ideas of lack of proper and acceptable means of identifications among artists in the areas of their creativities irrespective of their aspects of specializations has been tagged as one among the problems facing studio art practice. Artists especially the painters have resorted to the adaptation of the existing mode of art practice without focusing on their initiative for creation of independent art works that are free of another person's mode of expression.

All these innovative means of exploration were carried out due to the high cost and unavailability of conventional painting media (Sulaiman, 2025). Several attempts have been made by both artists and non-artists to proffer solutions to this ravaging problem in studio art practice using available waste materials as media, tools and implements. This is the brain behind the idea of Squiggle-ism which tends to focus on the need for the exploration of environmental seemly waste materials; polymer (plastic) for the creation of painting medium that is built on the creation of accidental special effects in easel paintings (Anderson and Jenkins, 2020).

Definitions and properties of polymeric materials: polymers as large macromolecules, thermoplastics vs. thermosets, characteristic properties (viscosity, adhesion, film formation, drying behaviour, compatibility with pigments) were the examined areas of perspective in this research. The review of the prior works of the founder; Sulaiman Dauda Ishola using waste polymer or locally sourced polymers in painting media are some of the samples studies along the three prominent African innovative artist: El Anatsui, Yinka Shonibare, and Peju Alatise. The exploration of waste polymer in painting for special effects" by Sulaiman, Dauda Ishola et al. in international discussion on art and its media which centers on the use of waste plastics and nylons to compound a painting medium was pinned pointed. A comparative review of the properties of conventional painting media, especially acrylic resins, oil and polymers were juxtaposed side by side in this research paper based on the creative works.

Sulaiman Dauda Ishola and His Art Practice

In the phase of his style, techniques and medium based on descriptive analysis and studio reviews from Nigerian academic and art sources, he leans toward symbolic realism with a blend of representational imagery and cultural motifs that emphasize moral, spiritual, and social themes (Chan and Zhan, 2021). There is a strong narrative drive in his visual language that is drawn on African identity, Islamic spirituality, and community values. His compositions are often structured, balanced and deliberate for the purpose of reflecting both academic training and cultural consciousness (Anderson and Jenkins, 2020). His works are often meticulous and academic in nature, with controlled brush, pallet-knife and fire burning flame work of layered colouration and symbolic figuration (Anderson and Jenkins, 2020).

They emphasize composition and content clarity, typical of artists who prioritize storytelling and moral commentary. Occasionally, he employs mixed media for texture or contrast but still within the painterly framework. Technically, Sulaiman's process of creativity is a studio-based and painterly grounded in classical training rather than experimental material manipulation (Chen and Li, 2025). His strength depends on draftsmanship and composition that are aligned with the Fine Art academic tradition rather than installation or conceptual art practice.

Primarily, his works of painting and mixed media on canvas, usually incorporating textural or symbolic motifs related to African heritage and Islamic geometry format of Arabic letters, words and sentences (Park, 2025). Its medium serves the narrative and moral message but not just form or texture. His medium of studio art practice places him within the Fine Art of painting tradition of African modernists like Yusuf Grillo, Ben Enwonwu, and Kolade Oshinowo (Nguyen, Tade & Peter, 2024).

According to Nguyen, Tade & Peter, (2024):

His contemporaries have embraced multimedia and installation for global appeal, Sulaiman's focus on painting maintains a classical integrity that is valuable but less aligned with the conceptual trends that drive international visibility today.

His PAPCRAY Medium of Painting

The medium of expression of Squiggle-ism is polymeric: plastic popularly called PAPCRAY which deals with the amalgamation of plastic and nylon materials that are typically polymer in nature with high level of molecular

mass. It tends to contain other substances to improve performance and or reduce production costs. Plastic is a transparent and elastic material that could be molded when heated (Li, Sun and Zhao, 2021). By incorporating heat into the product, it makes it resemble colourant. The mixture is simply, creamy, watery and hot with hydraulic press while being heated by steam. The final product has a highly polished finish imparted with a surface format of steel mold (Nguyen, Tade and Peter, 2024).

Random Measurement of Waste Materials							
Experimental Series	The Degree of the Melting Rate	Waste Polymer (P)	Nylon Waste (NW)	Crayons (Cr)	Total Available Materials in Gram	Results	Observations
Experiment B1	60°C	Half pan weight	Half pan weight	Quarter pan weight	40grm	Gooley	Dropping special effect
Experiment B2	60°C	One pan weight	One pan weight	Quarter pan weight	40grm	Gooley	Cracking special effect

Tab. i: Summary of the Waste Materials Explored and Experimented Adapted from a PhD Thesis 2017, Pg 204

The problem of over dependence of artists especially the painters on imported conventional painting media like oil paint, acrylic, poster colour and pastels underscores the total aggregate in the level of studio art practice due to their unavailability and high cost. This is the problem that squiggle-ism tends to solve, because, those media are not constantly available and the few ones available are too expensive (Huang, R and Lee, 2020). Due to this, many artists find it difficult to practice effectively. This needs the intervention of local content.

Therefore, this task of medium exploration, innovation and experimentation serves as a motivation for the studio artists who may not have adequate idea of maximizing their art practice due to lack of affordable media. This research finding of squiggle-ism was derived from the desire to provide solutions to this problem in studio art practice. It is high time the artists, especially the painters, redirected and refocused their attention on this important aspect of studio art inquiry as a way of making meaningful and useful things from seemly meaningless and useless discarded things.

The mission and vision of squiggle-ism are built on the development of contemporary paintings and decorations as a continuous trend of creativity. All

the subjects involved are looked at, as a link tailored towards differentiations in content and materials. In order to retain these good qualities of art practice, the need for exploration with different possibilities of group packaging and visual historical connections of African setting and belief are been targeted in his current research findings of both Master and PhD research findings. This was made possible through the use of local content in the adoption of discarded materials from the artists' immediate environment.

His Squiggle-ism Style of Painting

Art and its practice are like a millipede and centipede with many legs without proper foot print (Huang, R and Lee, 2020). There are many styles of approaches in art creation right from the time of the greatest artists like Monnet, Pablo Picasso and host of others. But today, many artists have nearly abandoned this laudable legacy of our fathers. In order to bring back the seemingly lost glory, there come the invention of Squiggle-ism as a style in painting.

According to Sulaiman, (2025);

Squiggle-ism is regarded as a body of techniques, medium and approaches in painting and drawing that simply involves the act of carefully and care freely arrangement of both curled and twisted structural and rhythmic lines of PAPCRAY medium in favour of accidental design of special effects of either drops or cracks feelings. This is formed from two different morphemes of squiggle and ism. **Squiggle** simply means carefree use of line irrespective of its forms, types and kinds. **Ism** can be simply explained as a special approach of handling ideas and thoughts. These two morphemes are amalgamated to give a style of creativity in art with clear emphasis in painting and drawing.

Drop-Pico and Crack-Kico Techniques

Sulaiman's Drop-Pico technique is grounded in the rhythmic dripping, sprinkling, and layering of PAPCRAY pigments on assorted textured surfaces (Huang, R and Lee, 2020). The process balances control and spontaneity, echoing Yoruba musical stroke and visual rhythm. The resulting surfaces embody fluidity, energy and movement with visual metaphors for divine inspiration and the continuity of creativities.

On the other hand, the Crack-Kico technique explores medium rupture of PAPCRAY as expressive strategies. Through the deliberate cracking of the paint layers using heat, adhesive, and mixed media, Sulaiman creates tactile surfaces that reveal both fragility and endurance. The cracked textures recall

traditional African wall murals and earthen aesthetics, invoking themes of imperfection, memory, and resilience in the life of man and his immediate environment.

In line with this, the Drop-Pico technique of Sulaiman denotes thousands of PAPCRAY melted dropping dots of paint on the same surface feelings to illustrate African contextual feeling on human interaction within their environment with their Creator using assorted slogans. Together, both techniques exemplify a material philosophy of transformation, where surface processes become metaphors for life's dynamic rhythm and spiritual renewal.



Sulaiman D.I., Home Town I, PAPCRAY on Hardboard, 3x4 Fits, Crack Kico Technique of Squiggleism Style of Painting, 2018, Collector, Dr. Musa M.M. HOD, Theater Art, Emilong University, London



Sulaiman D.I., Home Town I, PAPCRAY on Hardboard, 3x4 Fits, Drop-Pico Technique of Squiggleism Style of Painting, 2023, Collector, Barrister Olajire Ojo, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Comparative Contexts

El Anatsui and His Philosophy of Material Transformation

The internationally recognized Ghanaian artist: El Anatsui is a discarded bottle caps and metallic debris employer for the creation acceptable monumental wall sculptures. His works symbolize regeneration and memory within the African context. Similarly, Sulaiman's Drop-Pico and Crack-Kico techniques of polymeric PAPCRAY medium of Painting tends to treat texture as living materials capable of transformation in African context. Besides, Anatsui's work engages physical assemblage and recycling and Sulaiman internalizes this philosophy within the painterly surface (Afolabi, 2025). Both artists, however, share a metaphysical dialogue with materiality to transforming the ordinary into the sublime through process and time.



'Opening of time', Anatsui



Sulaiman D.I., Songs of Praise I, PAPCRAY on Hardboard, 3x4 Fits, Crack-Kico Technique of Squiggle-ism Style of Painting, 2023, Collector, Senator Muhidee S.

In the Phase of Yinka Shonibare and His Politics of Surface

Yinka Shonibare a Nigerian constructs visual narratives through the symbolic use of Dutch wax textiles, interrogating issues of colonial identity and hybridist (Afolabi, 2025). Sulaiman's engagement with surface is less overtly political but equally profound his cracked and dropping textures represent the spiritual surface of African existence, where imperfection becomes beauty. Both artists use surface as a site of meaning making, yet Shonibare dramatizes the historical costume, while Sulaiman spiritualizes the painted skin of the canvas.



Yinka Shonibare, And the Wall Fell away, 2016



Sulaiman D.I., Spirituality of Political Campaign, PAPCRAY on Hardboard, 3x4 Fits, Crack-Kico Technique of Squiggle-ism Style of Painting, 2024, Collector, Senator Muhidee S. Ojo, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Peju Alatise and Her Materiality of Storytelling

In the artistic phase of Peju Alatise's mixed media installations tends to combine the sculptural forms and symbolic nature of materials to address identity, spirituality and gender in the world of creativities. Sulaiman's work parallels his material experimentation but transforms narrative into abstract material poetics. His Drop-Pico gestures function as visual rhythms, while his

Crack-Kico surfaces serve as metaphors for layered histories and renewal concepts. Both artists foreground the tactility of matter as a vehicle for storytelling and philosophical reflection on African textual feelings and mutual understanding (Afolabi, 2025).



'Orange Scarf goes to Heaven', Peju Alatise



Sulaiman D.I., Expedition, PAPCRAY on Hardboard, 3x4 Fits, Drop-Pico Technique of Squiggle-ism Style of Painting, 2025, Collector, Prof. Abdullahi D.F. Dean, Faculty of Arts, Islamic University of Medina

Sulaiman's Contributions to Contemporary African Painting

It has been confirmed by many art critiques: Fowowe M.O., Nigeria, 2009, Etim Morgan Kenya, 2000, Art writers: William Fag, Cambridge, USA, 2022 and Curator; Kofi Hassan Ghana, 2023 that Sulaiman's medium, techniques and style extend beyond mere stylistic innovation; they articulate a philosophical framework of African spirituality to his creativities in studio art practice (Afolabi, 2025). By emphasizing its processes, accident induce design and the agency of materials, to his practice resonates with indigenous African aesthetics that value rhythm, imperfection, and transformation (Huang, and Lee, 2020).

Based on critical analysis of his used of medium, techniques and style and been compared to the large-scale installations of Anatsui, the narrative theatrics of Shonibare and that of Peju Alatise, Sulaiman's work remains intimately painterly with a meditative dialogue among artists, media and metaphysical consciousness. His Drop-Pico embodies vitality and movement, while his Crack-Kico represents endurance and revelation. These dualities tend to flow and fracture, control and chance the artistic mirror of the African philosophical ideas that creativities arise through the interaction of order and chaos in the minds and kinds of the artists (Huang, and Lee, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is better to situate Sulaiman Dauda Ishola alongside internationally acclaimed African artists in all aspects of creativities. It becomes evident that his contributions lie not only in technical innovation but

also in theoretical significance. His Drop-Pico and Crack-Kico techniques advance a distinctive language of textural abstraction rooted in African rhythm, material energy and spiritual philosophy (Sulaiman, 2025).

Sulaiman tends to occupy a crucial position within the expanding narrative of contemporary African art based on his high bridges of painterly traditions and modernism with the conceptual and material dynamism of twenty-first-century global art and Artificial Intelligence (AI) connections.

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