

**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 seemingly 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

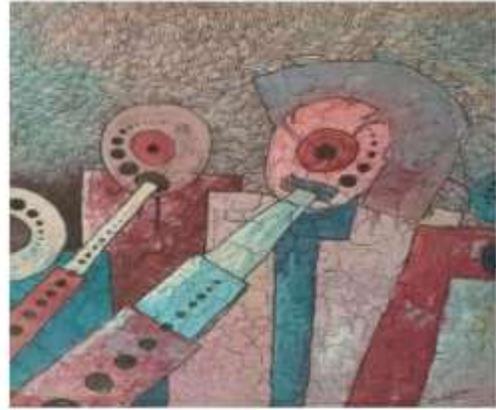
Comparative Contexts

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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