ADAPTING BUTTERFLY MOTIFS IN PAINTING

BY

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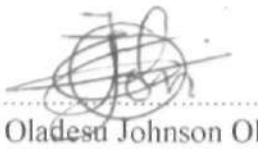
A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS (M.F.A.) DEGREE IN PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled "Adapting Butterfly Motifs in Painting" is a record of my original research. It has never been presented elsewhere in any application for a higher degree. All the quotations and information utilized and their sources are acknowledged by means of references.



Oladesu Johnson Olarinde

Date: 10/10/2000

CERTIFICATION

This project report entitled "Adapting Butterfly Motifs in Painting" by Oladesu Johnson Olarinde meets the regulations governing the award of the Master of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

..... Date.....

Mr. Jacob Jari
(Major Supervisor)

..... Date.....

Mr. Philip Gushem
(Minor Supervisor)

..... Date.....

(External Examiner)

..... Date.....

Mr. Jerry Buhari
Head of Department

..... Date.....

Dean, Postgraduate School

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty who has granted me this artistic wisdom. Also to my late father, P. David Oladesu, my late brother, Gabriel Ola and my loving mother, Comfort Moyoade, for her perfect understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Starting a project such as this demands the goodwill of certain people without whom it would not have been possible. Special mention must be made of my two supervisors, Messrs. Jari Jacob Jat and Philip Gushem.

I would like to acknowledge my brother Kenny Adewuyi Ken for both financial and moral support. A special thanks to all my lecturers, my extended and nucleus family.

A big thanks to Church of Christ at Sango Ota and Samaru for their spiritual assistance.

To all my colleagues and well wishers within and outside Zaria, I thank you all for your constructive criticism.

ABSTRACT

ADAPTING BUTTERFLY MOTIFS IN PAINTING

The butterfly comprises more than 100,000 species. It has different colourful patterns on and beneath the wings for safety reasons. With every flapping of the wings, two different patterns are exposed at interval. The artist was influenced by this phenomenon. This has fundamental philosophical parallels in life. The wings of the butterfly therefore provide a fulcrum on which a profound philosophy in painting can evolve. A review of literature and works were carried out to show the contribution of some artists who have done similar work with butterflies. Collection of data was by means of studies, drawings and sketches from selected butterflies that were collected from the insect museum. It was also from photographs and illustrations in textbooks. Various sketches were later made and developed from the selected butterfly forms and motifs. These were translated into detailed analytical representational drawings and paintings. The study was categorized into two major stages but with two components each.

a) Representational Stage

   i) Exploratory - flowers and butterflies in a landscape

   ii) Forms and motifs

b) Developmental Stage

   i) Total transformation

   ii) Figural infusing

Sixteen works were executed in the course of this research and presented as plates. The research recommends the need for modern artist to return to nature because nature provides for the studies of the elements and principles of design as well as for the understanding of some concepts in life.

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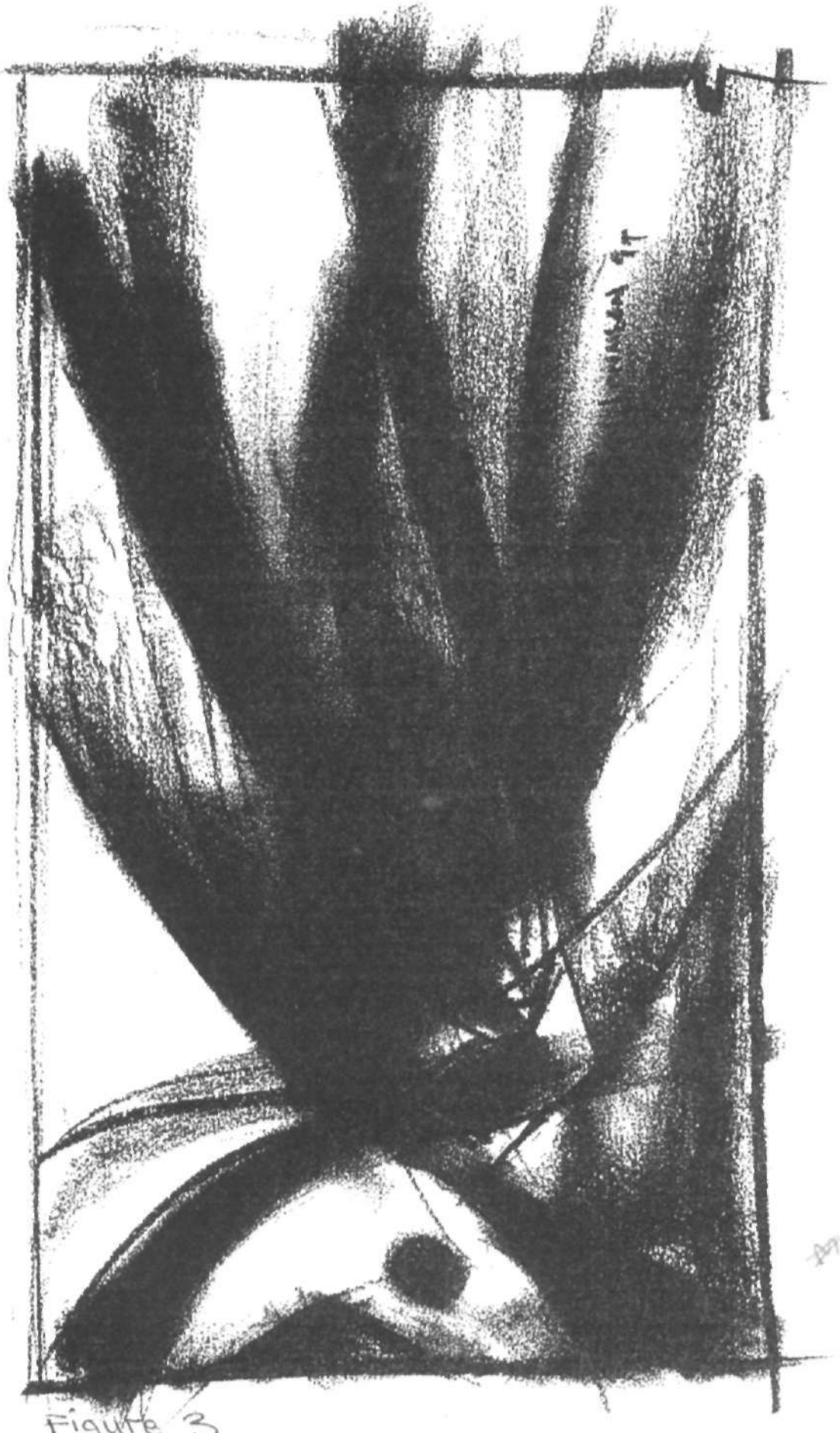


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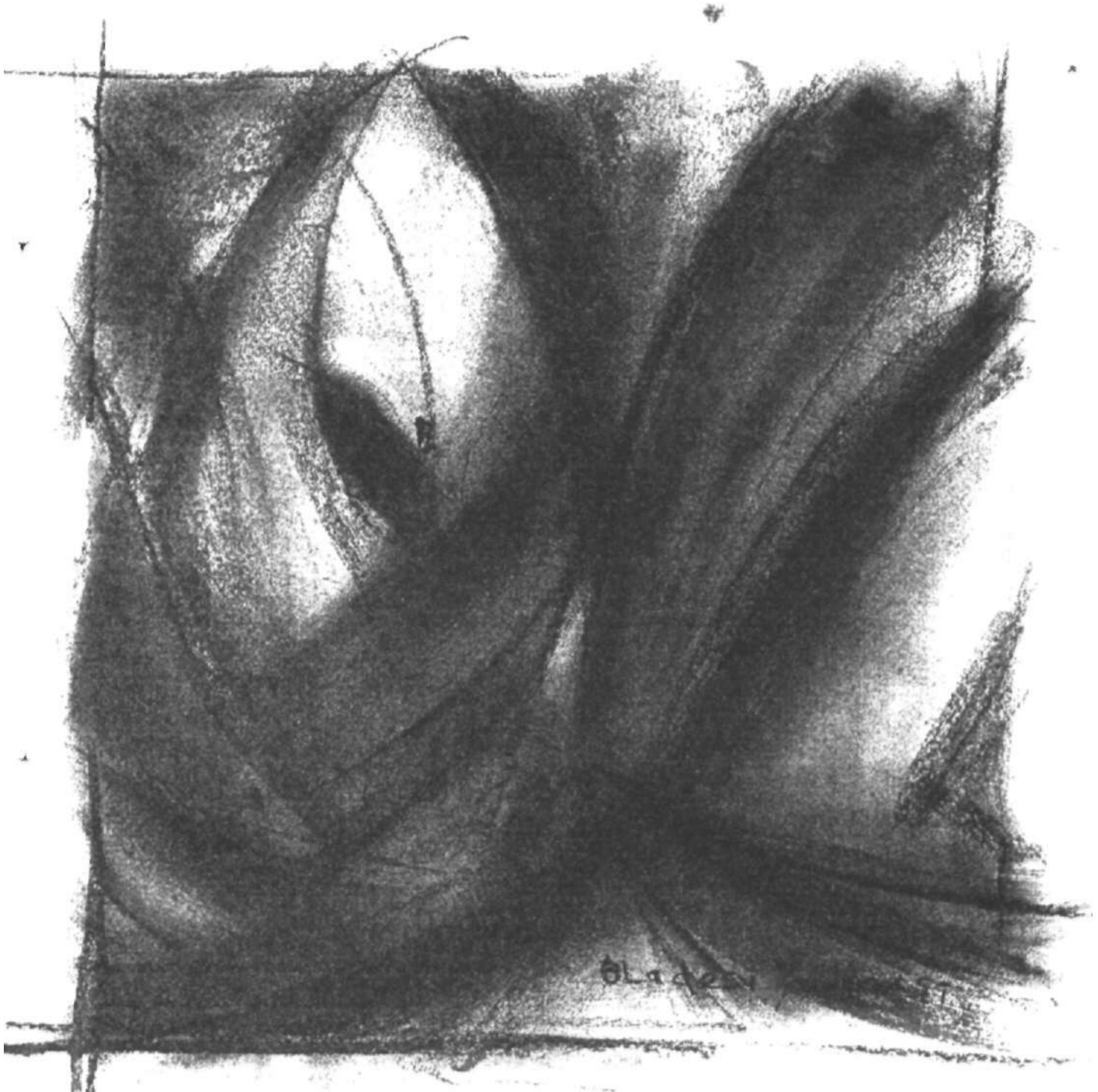


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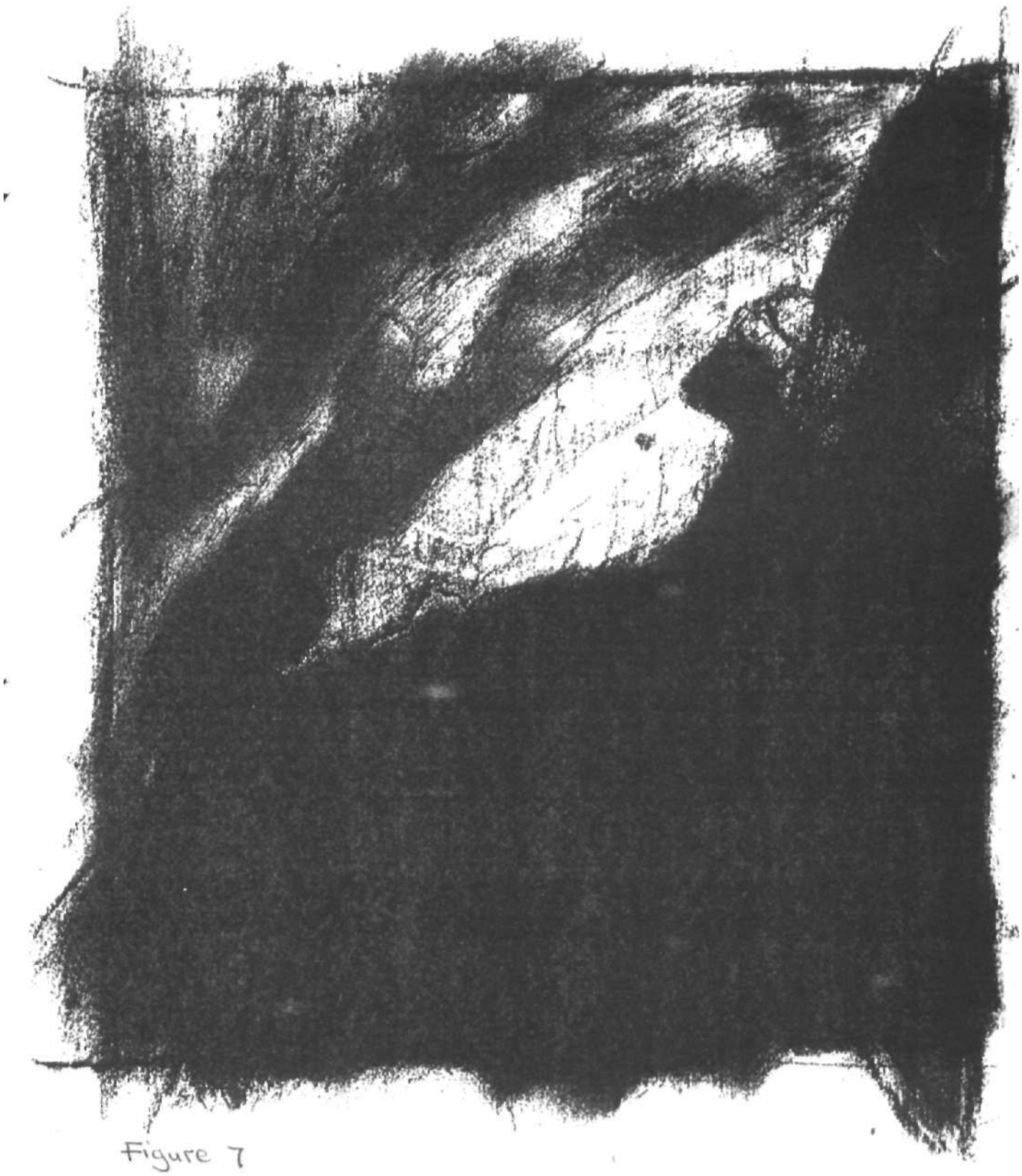


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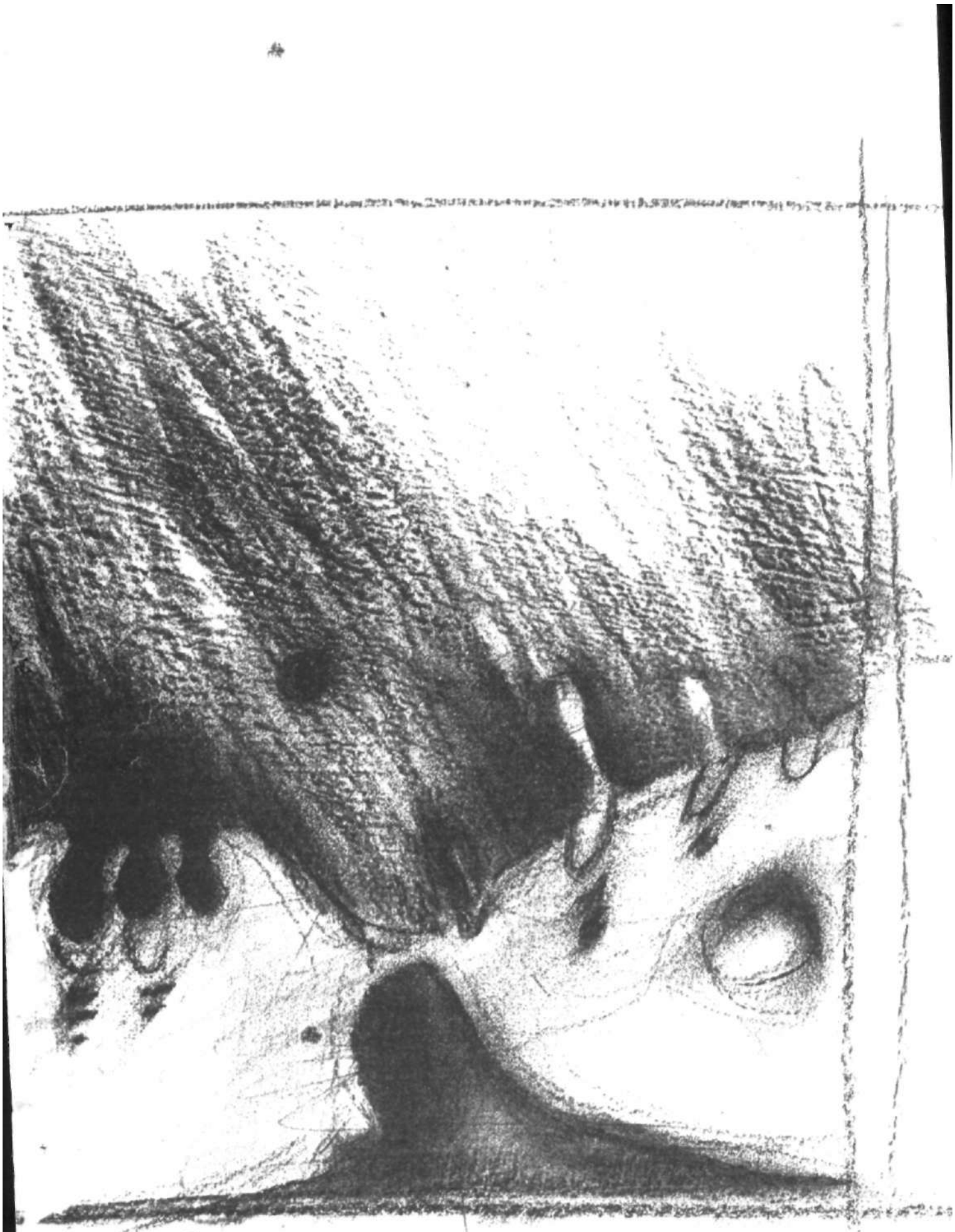


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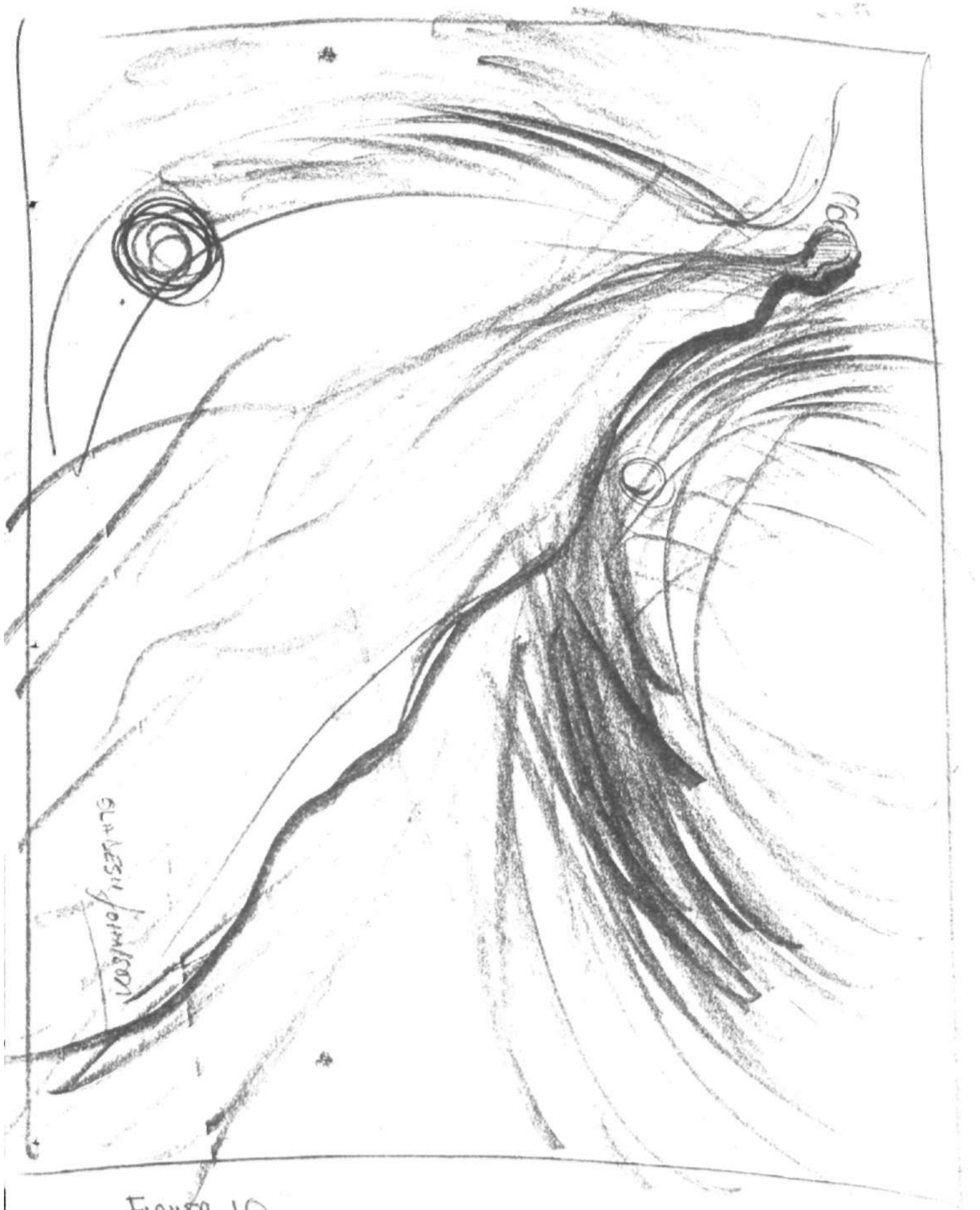


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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The butterfly comprises more than 100,000 species. It is the second largest among insects. Butterflies have different colourful patterns on and beneath the wings. This factor enables the butterfly to escape from its preys. With every flapping of the wings two different patterns are exposed at intervals. The wings are also covered with powdery scales that come off at the slightest touch. Butterflies fly during the day while at night they rest on trees or walls with their wings stretched. During the day, they are mostly found amongst flowers, sucking the sweet nectar with their probosis. They also visit places of urine, feaces and rotten fruits such as pawpaw, mango, orange, etc.

The adult butterfly lays its eggs in groups on stems and leaves of plants like maize or rice and live inside these plants. These eggs turn into caterpillars. Caterpillars live for some weeks and then change to pupa. This stage is a quiet one during which the insect neither moves nor feeds. Pupa later changes into the adult butterfly and flies away.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This research is concerned with the problem of how butterfly motifs can be adapted in painting.

Studies have shown that painting from natural elements has been in existence since the pre-historic times when animals and other objects were shown on cave walls.

Different sceneries were painted on the walls in the tomb of Amenenhed C1450BC by an Egyptian artist. The artist represented human figures, animals, birds, butterflies, fish and other objects and symbols.

Tufts (1974) states that Rugsch was fond of painting different flowers, tree trunks and animals like snakes, lizards, snails and butterflies. "Glasgow still life" and "Still life from the Ashmolean" are typical examples of her works.

Furthermore, Tufts (ibid) observes that Marian's interest was in natural history. Her interest in insects was very great. She created many paintings of insects from different places and later used them for book illustrations.

Similarly, McDermott, (1980) writes that Redon and Otta - Merseus explore on bizarre subjects and fantasy, sometimes showing insects in their natural habitat.

According to Phillips (1994), some renowned artists drew and painted subjects from wildlife. Calson and Audubon painted animals and birds then later switched to wildlife. Audubon made paintings of birds of America showing them sometimes eating butterflies.

Fosu, (1986) states that in Africa there is a record of an unknown artist who used butterflies for a collage.

Jari et al (1993) show Hassan's work entitled "Butterflies". The butterfly motifs are in nine columns which form a composition showing different parts of butterfly wings. Hassan's work stands out in that he did not paint the butterfly in its habitat as other artists. In this regard, his work comes close to the methods this researcher hopes to adopt in terms of magnification and emphasis.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most available paintings with butterflies are represented as they are seen in their natural habitat, showing butterflies with other elements such as flowers, birds, fruits, etc. This means that the butterfly is not solely used as a subject matter.

Furthermore, there is yet to exist any document that the researcher is aware of that proves that artists have been influenced by the phenomenon of the appearance of two different motifs on and beneath the wings of the butterfly. Although this phenomenon, as simplistic as it may seem to connote a safety device for the butterfly, portends fundamental philosophical parallels in life. The researcher believes that in life as on the wings of a butterfly, there are two sides of an issue or as the common cliche states "there are two sides to a coin". The wings of a butterfly therefore can provide a fulcrum on which a profound philosophy in painting can evolve.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study include:

(a) to paint butterflies in their natural habitat;

(b) to project the aesthetics of butterfly motifs;

(c) to adapt and transform the natural forms of butterfly motifs into stylised and abstract paintings;

(d) to explore the possibility of evolving a new painting philosophy inspired by the phenomenon of two different motifs appearing on and beneath butterfly wings.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study, it is hoped, will reawaken interest in natural study. When more and more interest is paid to seeming insignificant creatures like butterflies, the society may become more aware of the need to protect and make our environment conducive for the existence of all living species. This will slow down environmental pollution and degradation.

The study may open new possibilities in exploring different aspects of issues. The researcher may come up with a philosophy inspired by the different motifs of the butterfly. The study would not only have added to knowledge but would also have challenged society over narrow-mindedness.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

50 butterflies were acquired from the head of the Insect (Entomological) Museum of the Department of Agriculture, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Twenty were considered for the purpose of proper handling of this study which is confined to the butterfly form, motifs and patterns. Colour was used subjectively and abstract possibilities were explored. The research is based on practical work in the studio.

Some of the media employed include artist oil colour, water colour, pencils, canvas and paper.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE, KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

In this chapter, the researcher's focus has been on works from prehistoric period to modern times. Particular attention has been given to works that have a relationship with butterflies and nature in general. This review tries to identify artists whose works are prominent in the study of nature. The aim is to establish what formed the basis for their paintings. Also an attempt is made to explain or identify the methods, materials and the basic characteristic features of their works. Essentially, this review has helped to document works and artists who have painted butterflies. Most existing works reviewed represent western artists and few artists from Africa. The representation of contemporary African artists show that very few have worked in this direction and the efforts of these few are poorly documented.

Gardner (1959) shows a painting of an Egyptian in the tomb of Theban in Egypt entitled "Fowling Scene" (Plate I) in C 1450 BC. The artist represented human figures, animals, birds, butterflies, fish and other objects and symbols. This shows that at least butterflies have been found in paintings in the past.

McDermott (1980) states that Odilon Redon had a style that derived from many sources. He explored bizarre subjects, fantasy, the dress world, as well as imagery of French poet, Baudelaire and Edger Allen. Redon relied mostly on imagery from "floating spiders, insects, cyclopean eyes and humanoid creatures".



Plate - I
"Fowling Scene"
ThebanTomb(1570-1349BC)

Wright (1994) admits that "images of buoyancy and of aspirational floating are so central and thematic that they invade even Redon's calmer and more naturalistic work". His work entitled "Portrait of a woman with a bird of paradise and butterflies" (Plate II) is a brilliant painting with the woman's profile facing left. The painting looks sketchy with swiftly birds flying upwards perhaps to emphasize motion. Close to the far left, butterflies are clearly painted. The title and the presence of butterflies in this work confirm the interest some artists have had in their study.

McDermott (op.cit.) affirms that Otto-Marseus Van Schriek, "enlarged the definition of still life by painting entirely from nature. At first-hand he copied lizards, snakes, frogs and rare insects". Both Redon and Marseus also preferred to work from the bizarre to create some exotic effects. Marseus' work entitled "Serpents and insects" (Plate III) depicts frogs, snakes, butterflies and mushroom in a landscape. The butterflies are juxtaposed round a big tree in the middle of the painting where a fighting scene of snakes going after a butterfly could be sighted.

John James Audubon is one of American's great painters. According to Phillips (1994), Audubon was "influenced by nature and her product". One of his works, "Yellow billed cuckoo" (Plate IV) was realised in water colour, graphite and pastel. On a pawpaw tree, two birds are shown, one feeding on a butterfly. Also marks made by caterpillars are seen on the yellowish - green leaves.



Plate II
"Woman with a Bird of Paradise and Butterflies"
(C. 1905) by Odilon Redon
Oil on canvas 59cm x 48.5cm



Plate III
"Serpents and Insects (C 1650) by
Otto Marseus Van Schrieck
Oil on canvas 95.5cm x 73cm



Plate IV
"Yellow Billed Cuckoo" (1821-1822) by
John James Audubon
Water colour, Graphite, Pastel
49cm x 61.cm

Audubon has also painted several birds and flora of America as his favourite subjects. His approach to nature is quite different from both Redon and Marseus. While Redon and Marseus give equal attention to both the landscape and animals, animals in Audubon's painting take the largest proportion.

Equally important is the work of Robert Vickery who is also an American artist. Doherty (1993) writes that his work entitled "After the Swim" (Plate V) was executed in egg tempera. Generally, the painting gives a blue feeling. The major motif, the female swimmer, is placed in the middle of the painting covered with a striped orange, light blue and yellowish - green towel. Her head is tilted backward perhaps against a wall with shadows of blue leaves and butterflies. Her eyes are closed, her mouth opened as if in a trance. At the top right - corner of the painting, a bright yellow butterfly is painted as if it is pasted. Similarly there is another work by Vickery, a demonstration titled "White on white" (Plate VI). This painting is also realised in tempera in a blue background. The painting appears bare of any decoration but with wild texture. The nun's cornet with butterflies which vary in size are the only visual objects. Perhaps, Vickery paints butterflies for compositional significance. The two works are of the same colour scheme, with the butterflies displayed in the same way, though they are not the major motifs.



Plate V
"After the Swim" (1990) by Robert Vickrey
egg tempera



Plate VI
"White on White" (1992) by
Robert Vickrey
egg tempera

Turfts (1974) shows works of an artist Rachel Ruysch. Ruysch is a Dutch still-life painter. Her area of specialization is to depict different flowers, tree trunks and animals like snakes, lizards, snails and butterflies. (Plate VII).

Furthermore, Tufts (ibid) writes that Maria Sibylla Merian's interest was in natural history. Her interest in insects was very great that she made many works of insects from different places. From her "Surinam notebook" Merian made a water colour work (Plate VIII) showing a bird, grass and butterflies. The composition looks bare. The bird looks at the butterfly beneath it while another butterfly on the top right corner flies into the composition.

Basting is reported in Omelia (1997) to have painted a still life entitled "Autumn celebration" (Plate IX). Basting like Vickrey and Ruysch painted fruits as her major motif while the butterflies are represented as minor motifs. Basting writes that "On the garden table outside my kitchen window, I created a wonderful fall centerpiece of all sorts of apples". The painting is actually done in the centrepiece of the format, however she allowed the objects to flow into all the borders. At the top left corner, a butterfly flies into the centrepiece while a detached butterfly wing is painted at the top right corner.

Another artist reviewed is K.B. Hwang. Baker (1994) shows the work of Hwang entitled "Female nude on the grass R" (Plate X). Hwang paints the white female torso dominating the whole painting which is almost flat. Then he superimposes flowers which spring vertically on the main image.



Plate VII
"Glasgow Still Life" by
Rachel Ruysch 1664 - 1750



Plate VIII
"Surinam notebook" by
Maria Sibylla Merian (1647 - 1717)
Water colour



Plate IX
"Autumn Celebration" (1997) by
Marjolein Bastin
Water colour 45cm x 35cm



Plate X
"Female nude on the grass R" (1992) by
K.B. Hwang
16.5cm x 27.5cm

The background is painted grey and it flows into the 'S' shape of the female form with butterflies hovering around the female nude. The grass is not too pronounced. However, it gives a feeling of solidity while the red flowers arrest the viewers attention. The butterflies are played down into the background, perhaps to merge with the foreground. The overall view of the painting gives a greyish effect except for the flowers. This painting may signify the flowering age of the lady.

Jari et al (1993) show the work of Hassan which is very vital to this research (Plate XI). "Butterflies" as it is entitled does not only show the butterfly motifs but also show their use as a subject matter. The butterfly motifs appear in nine columns.

Another artist whose work is of some significance to this research is Adetoro (1999). He states that "...he is still documenting things that interest him using fabric materials." Some of the things that interest him could be seen in one of his works entitled "life in Abeokuta" (Plate XII). This work is a batic, a design of about thirty columns. The columns are made up of different motifs such as traditional motifs, snails, broom, butterflies and so on. This work is similar to Hassan's columns of butterflies.

In conclusion, this review has focused on a few works of artists from pre-historic time to the contemporary era both in Europe and in Africa. Their contribution in forms of composition, approach to subject matter, style, medium and other elements are appraised. The researcher has realised that most of these painters did not use the butterfly as a major motif, rather, they used it to balance

their composition or as a not so important motif except in Adetoro's and Hassan's case where it was used as subject matter. In this study, the form and the motifs from the butterfly will be magnified and emphasised. Furthermore, this study hopes to develop a philosophy inspired by the nature of the wings of the butterfly.

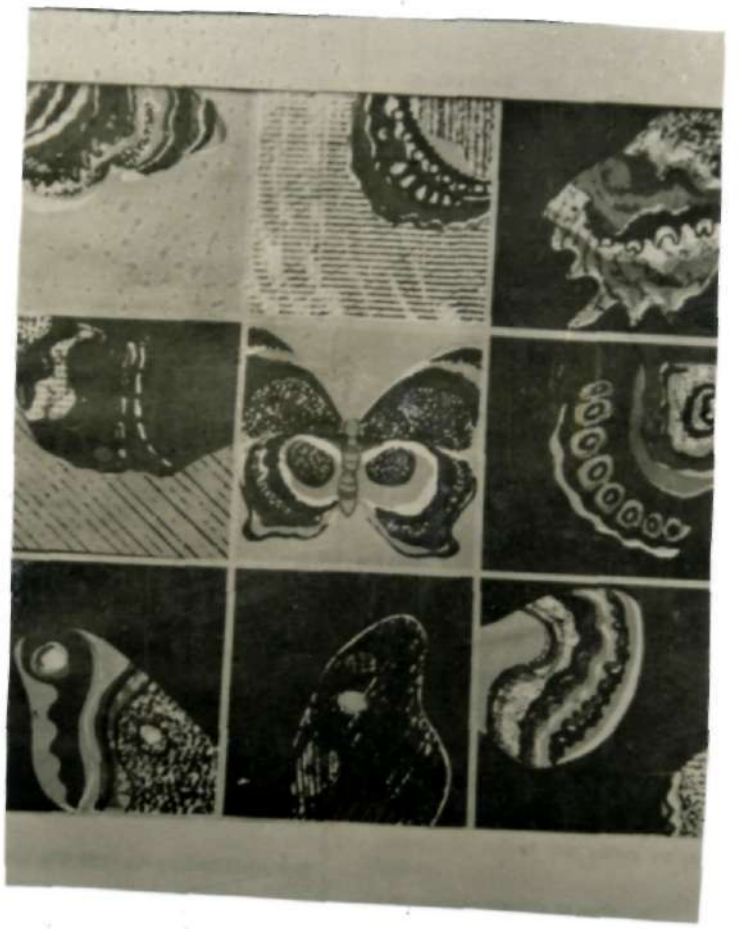


Plate XI
"Butterflies" by
Yakubu Hassan
Serigraph



Plate XII
"Life in Abeokuta" - Apartment (1998)
By Adetoro S. Abayomi
Batic: 112cm x 185cm

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the materials used, the method of data collection for preliminary studies, the method of data analysis and the mode of production of the resultant art works.

3.1 MATERIALS/PRESENTATION

A selected media of artists oil colour, pastel, charcoal and pencil were used in this study. Canvas was also used for the preliminary studies.

The research experimented with conventional approach of single-panel picture making to the unconventional multiple. Two panels of canvas were used to paint single picture frames. This was meant to explore variety in picture making and ease in transportation.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

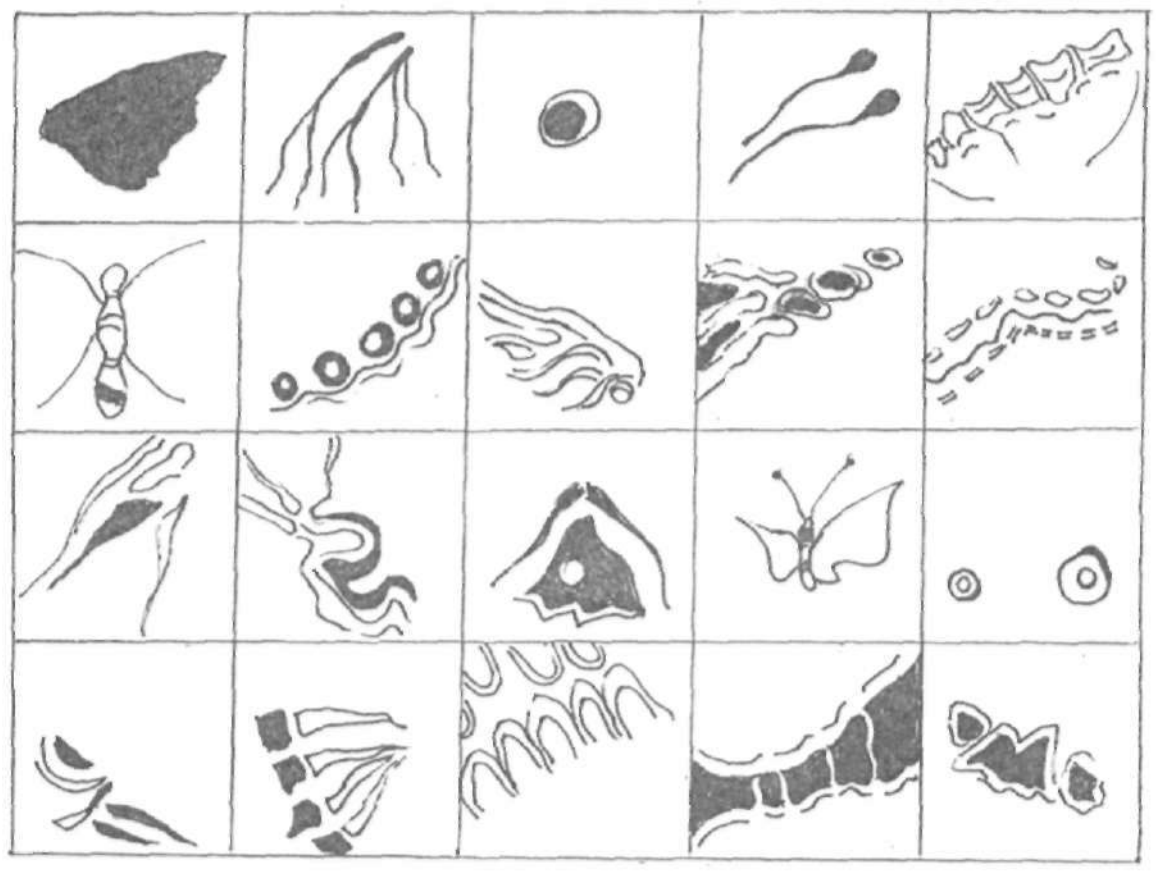
The data for this research was obtained from studies, drawings and sketches derived from selected butterflies that were collected from the Entomological Museum of the Department of Agriculture, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The researcher also made use of photographs from textbooks.

Various sketches were made from selected butterflies. Selection was based on the researcher's subjective aesthetic preference in elements like form,

composition, and personal interest. The butterfly forms and motifs were focused on using pencil pastel and paper to realise them.

Sketches were later developed from the selected butterfly forms and motifs into detailed representational drawings and paintings. Some of these studies were mostly analytical. In the course of this study, the researcher also got live butterflies in large transparent polythene bags to help in the study of their movements especially the position of the wings when in motion.

3.3 SELECTED BUTTERFLY MOTIFS ENCOUNTERED



3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were transformed into paintings which were classified into two major stages but with two components each. This was for easy and systematic interpretation of the various themes treated. It was also to aid the developmental process of the study.

The classification is as follows:-

a) Representational Stage

i) Exploratory - Flowers and butterflies in a landscape

ii) Forms and motifs

b) Developmental Stage

i) Total transformation

ii) Figural infusion

a) Representational Stage

i) Exploratory

This first stage of painting, marked the beginning of the study. The researcher attempted to start from the known to the unknown by capturing the butterflies in a landscape with other elements such as flowers and shrubs. Two works were painted with much emphasis on the flower than the butterfly. This helped the researcher to explore more on the butterfly's habitat. Sometimes both the landscape and the butterfly were given equal attention. "Good morning" Plate XIII and "Visitation" Plate XIV illustrate the works in this stage.

ii) Forms and Motifs

The second stage of this researcher is on forms and motifs. An attempt was made to play around with the butterfly forms and motifs for compositional purposes. The butterfly's wings in motion was particularly the area of interest as shown in "Celebration" Plate XIX and "Rose and butterfly" Plate XVIII.

Also, soft and hard edge technique were explored as exemplified in "Chain flight" Plate XXI and "Vibration" Plate XV.

b) Developmental Stage

The butterfly forms and motifs explored were transformed into total abstraction. This is an interesting stage in that the researcher spontaneously and

improvisationally used the motifs from butterflies to come up with advanced compositions like "Virgin" and "Flight" Plates XXIII and XXII.

iii) Figural Infusion

At this stage, figures were infused to make a philosophical statement. The two-sided nature of the butterfly wing inspired paintings that portrayed an important aspect of human endeavour: for every negative there is a positive; More so in painting spaces. "The Politician" Plate XXIV and "The Living and the Dead" Plate XXVI are examples.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF WORKS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a record of works of the research which have been catalogued. The works are discussed in the context of their production.

Some problems were encountered during the course of the research. They varied from techniques to creativity. For instance there was a problem of selecting from the numerous butterflies that could be used. However, after careful consideration, appropriate butterflies were selected based on their shapes, motifs, colours and physical appearance. Another problem was how to abstract from the butterfly because the patterns and motifs on them may appear as textile designs in the paintings if not well handled. To solve this problem the few patterns and motifs selected were situated within thematic context inter-relating them with space, form and colour.

It was observed that the butterfly can be used to teach elements and principles of design. Line, space, colour, texture, repetition, harmony, rhythm, movement and balance can be found on the motif and patterns of a butterfly. It was also discovered that the butterfly has two different patterns on and beneath the wings. It is likely that not many painters realised this. Majority of butterfly paintings were painted with flowers. It was also observed that to study the natural colours of the butterfly, it should not be preserved with any killing agent. The

agent reduces the butterfly's natural colour intensity. Another observation was that only few African contemporary artists have worked with butterflies compared to European contemporary artists.

For the purpose of this analysis, sixteen paintings were chosen out of the works that were made in the course of the research. They are categorised into two major stages but each with two components. They are as follows:-

a) Representation stage

   i) Exploratory - Flowers and butterflies in landscape Plates XIII and XIV

   ii) Forms and motifs Plates XV to XXI

b) Developmental stage

   i) Total transformation Plates XXII to XXIII

   ii) Figural infusion Plates XXIV to XXVIII

4.1 LIST OF WORKS

"Good morning" shown in Plate XIII is a landscape painting showing trees, shrubs, grass, flowers and butterflies in a low horizon. The brush strokes were manipulated to create movement and harmony of colours and lines. The cool colours were used to portray late morning feeling. The yellowish-green and light blue suggest distance, while red, purple, and the ultramarine blue suggest closeness. Also, the red color was used to warm up the path. The tree shrubs,

flowers, grass and the butterflies were placed at different angles to balance the composition. The placement of the butterflies in this painting helped to situate them on their natural habitat.



Plate XIII
"Good Morning" - 1999
Oil on Canvas
152 x 102cm

This piece gives the feeling that no matter what the night may be, the morning will come with its freshness. If flowers, shrubs and trees can thrive, then there is hope for humanity.

As the flies visit feaces, as boys visit girls so also is the case of butterflies and flowers. This is shown in "Visitation" Plate XIV. To the economist, these are "complimentary objects". Similarly in art, red is the complimentary of green. Therefore the red petals placed within shades of green and greenish - yellow were carefully applied to compliment each other just like in Plate XIII where flowers were painted in a landscape. In this painting the close-up of the flowers and butterflies were particularly considered. Plate XV shows the first painting in stage two titled "Vibration". In this painting the flower and butterfly, the major elements from Plate XIII and XIV were combined. The blue shades represent butterfly while yellow indicate flowers. Harmonious lines were swiftly and colourfully painted to enrich a rhythmic spatial balance. Generally, when things vibrate, they resolve to either separate or unite. Could it be what is happening in the Nigerian power shift?



Plate XIV
"Visitation" - 1999
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm



Plate XV
"Vibration" - 1998
Oil on Canvas
40.5 x 50.5cm

"Reflection" shows a painting bare of texture and decoration except some curve - linear lines. The whole surface of the canvas is almost smooth and the degree of light and dark colours are subtle. "Reflection" portrays the possibility in life of things not appearing as they seem.

Plate XVII shows a simple landscape. This realised "butterfly landscape" as entitled is well patterned, and textured. It presents a radial balance with vertical and horizontal movement. Different wings were painted to form the background. This abstract painting shows dull colours although light yellow was introduced for emphasis and to portray movement.

A painting like this stirs viewers to reflect on making impossible things possible. Therefore the confidence of moving on into more abstract butterfly research becomes more and more interesting.



Plate XVI
Reflection - 1998
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm

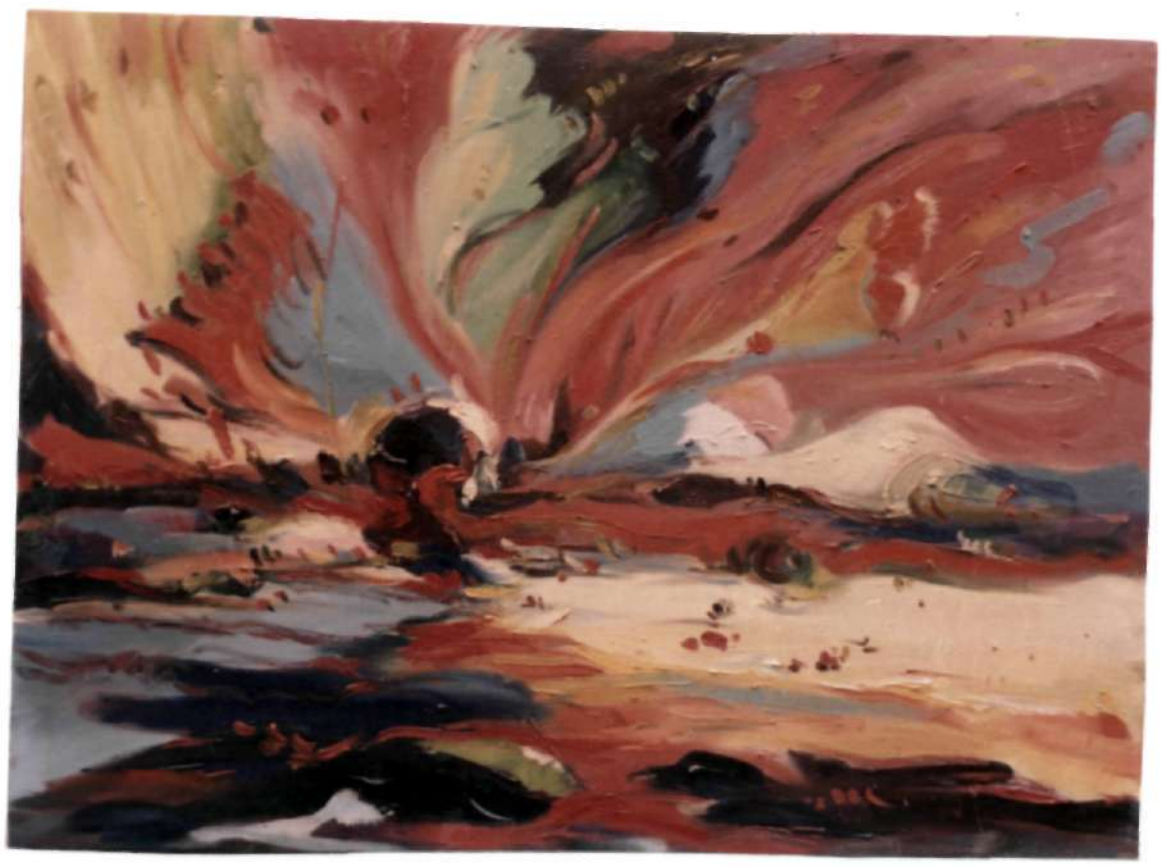


Plate XVII
"Butterfly Landscape" - 1999
Oil on Canvas
79.5 x 59.3cm

The work entitled "Rose and butterfly" shown in Plate XVIII is rendered in geometric shapes. It is sensuously blended to unify both the butterfly shape at the left and the flower in the middle of the canvas. The shapes are varied to create rhythm. The negative and positive space appear in rhythmic forms. The work is almost monochromatic and serene.

"Rose and Butterfly" is an abstract stylised painting analysing two harmless and beautiful objects (butterfly and rose flower).

"Celebration" is the title of the work in Plate XIX. Its concept was realised from "Rose and Butterfly". The butterfly shapes are arranged in pyramidial form to create symmetry. At the upper part of the painting butterfly wings are surrounded with spaces to create depth. This knife work creates lively patterns of green, dark green, red and yellow. It is an attempt to draw from the cubist's colour scheme which are always monochromatic. The circular butterfly motifs were introduced to break the triangular butterfly shapes. This clusters of butterfly wings may represent a colourful African festival.



Plate XVIII
Rose and Butterfly - 1999
Oil on Canvas
61 x 91.5cm



Plate XIX
Celebration - 1998
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm

"Fresh" shown in Plate XX is an advancement of the two previous paintings discussed. Using a brilliant pallete of red and green as complimentary colours, the wings of the butterfly were first painted in geometric shapes. Other colours were worked in (wet on wet) like in water colour technique. This forms a thin layer in some parts on the surface of the canvas. Small motifs in colours were embellished on the composition. This method is employed to create movement of colour and colour harmony. The major motif, which is still the butterfly wing is spread to cover the surface in vigorous brush strokes.

Plate XXI shows a double pannel work entitled "chain flight". The painting is full of vigorous brush strokes suggesting butterfly wings. The main subject is shifted far to the right in the composition and balanced with the long stretched left wing. Each of the pannels can stand independently. At a glance, the joining of the pannel may not be visible. It is because the dramatic blurred colours were allowed to flow through the painting. The red-orange colour at the far right runs through the painting to create harmony, especially the circular motif which looks like an eye ball. Shades of blue, generally dominate the painting surface. Shadows of green and purple were invested to create solidity and depth.



Plate XX
Fresh - 1999
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm



Plate XXI
Chain Flight - 1999
Oil on Canvas
183 x 61cm

This painting signifies the instability of human nature. When uncertainty and insecurity arise, there is "chain flight" for food and employment.

The beauty of a butterfly is mostly seen when it is in flight. It flashes its beauty under the sun for the glory of God. Plate XXII is entitled "Flight". The pannel is double and separatable, thus each can stand as a complete painting of its own.

This painting begins the third stage in this research. A grave yard always brings stories of ghosts into our memory. So also even when the butterfly was totally transformed, the image still appeared. Although this painting shows minimum imitative tendency, yet wings of a butterfly could be seen. The yellowish - orange colour represents the butterfly wings which run through the painting. The wings stand out with sharp outlines against the greyish blue - green colours in the background giving the impression of silhouettes. The painting shows that colours at the top are less brilliant while the colours at the bottom look stronger but dull. The weight of this work is tilted to the left. However, elements such as the dynamic strong line at the right and the right wing of the butterfly give a visual balance. Some motifs of butterfly were infused to create harmony. The painting evokes the feeling of soldiers, killing, ghost and the grave yard and butterflies in flight.



Plate XXII
Flight - 1999
Oil on Canvas
152.5 x 60.5cm

"Virgin" shown in Plate XXIII is a double-pannel work like "chain flight". The surface of this painting is full of rough lines that create a lively pattern of red, yellow, purple and blue. The yellow shape which forms the positive space appears leaf-like, but it represents a butterfly motif. The introduction of brilliant blue, purple and dabs of yellow create a butterfly feeling.

Virgin" as the title implies is derived from the philosophy of two sides to every issue which the researcher hopes to address. To the top left, the head of the virgin could be seen in purple highlighted with yellow. The head is buried in red shades of coloured lines. The head flows into the purple neck then extends into the yellow shade at the far right while the other shoulder is extended to the yellow shape below. The yellow shape in the middle right represents the virgin's gown. In our modern time every young girl is seen as a virgin or touched and this explains the two sides to every issue. Therefore the red colour symbolises blood from abortion while the blue represents purity. The yellow shape shows the first impression of what such a young girl should be. Therefore if a woman is not a virgin then by whom was she touched?



Plate XXIII
"Virgin" 1999
Oil on Canvas
122 x 91cm

The fourth stage opens up with a series of more philosophical titles.

"The politicians" shown in Plate XXIV portrays primary, secondary and some tertiary colours. The colours are vibrantly displayed in a subtle brush texture. In a simple arrangement, the wings of the butterfly were simplified into shapes to represent human beings in costume. These shapes create harmony and movement against the background. From the left, the figure in orange bows towards the "politician" who is in red and above all of them. Likewise other figures in purple and yellowish green, they are all at the mercy of the figure in red. The butterfly antenna nob were used to represent the heads of these figures.

The figure in red is arrogantly posed as often observed in Nigerian politicians. Before election however, they went about to beg for masses' votes. After voting them into power, it becomes the turn of the masses to beg the elected politician for their rights. This to the researcher is an apt description of two sides to an issue.



Plate XXIV
Politician - 1999
Oil on Canvas
74 x 88.5cm

"The oppressors and the oppressed" is shown in Plate XXV. The butterfly is still the main motif. The yellow shape represents the butterfly wings. The left wing represents the oppressors whose heads spring from the right wings with their hands stained with blood yet they jubilate. The oppressed figures have their antenna "knob - heads" down cast with traces of red colour representing blood flowing down. They appear heavy with burden. However within the oppressed at the left wings, there are still some oppressors who are represented in yellow "nob - heads" in between the red "knobs".

The entire work is achieved with mild brush strokes except to the extreme left where the strokes are bold. The circular shapes of the butterfly motif keeps being repeated to create harmony. The diagonal bluewish - green brush strokes at the background create a pattern of butterfly in motion.

"The living and the dead" shown in Plate XXVI is derived from the butterfly motif. This painting is seen as a dialogue between positive and negative space. The positive space cuts across the painting. Two "knobs" could be seen representing "man and woman". They in turn represent the living. At the bottom part of the positive shape, seven knobs extend downwards to indicate the "dead". Colour is symbolic in this painting.



Plate XXV
Oppressed and Oppressors - 1999
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm

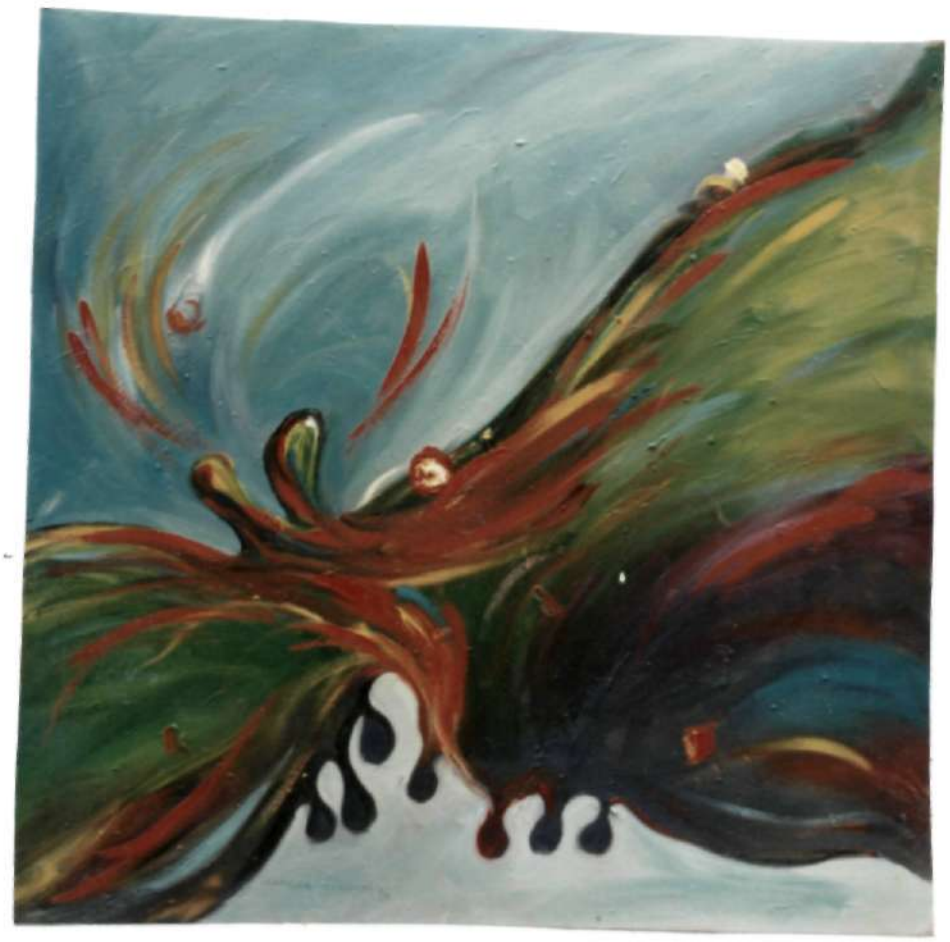


Plate XXVI
The Living and the Dead - 1999
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm

The greenish shade represents earth, while red represents stress, turbulence hatred which man encounters on earth. Blue stands for nothingness which both the living and the dead are left to struggle with. However, the light blue at the bottom is more peaceful than the upper part of the painting. This was intentional to show that the dead are more at peace than the "living"; that is why the brush strokes at the top are more vibrant.

"Confused Democracy" is shown in Plate XXVII. This work falls into the fourth category. The painting is basically rendered with wild brush strokes of red, blue and green. The red and the blue colours form the butterfly wings, while the greenish - yellow forms the background. In this painting, butterfly wings are varied and carefully arranged to display balance. Some figures were rendered in silhouette.

This painting describes a particular political period in Nigeria. Considering the philosophy of two sides to every issue, the researcher represents democracy with the blue shape while the red shapes represent the military regime.



Plate XXVII
"Confused Democracy" - 1999
Oil on Canvas
91 x 91cm

At a point of changing from military democracy, a lot of violence occurred, as such wild curved brush strokes were used to indicate that turning point and thus the title "Confused democracy".

"After Marriage" is shown in Plate XXVIII. This painting still addresses the philosophy of two sides to every issue. The butterfly wings are displayed in subtle linear manner. From the top left to the right downwards, the lines are mild when compared to the curved brush strokes upwards. The colours are harmoniously blended. Green colours can be seen in all points of the painting surface. Red has been carefully chosen to compliment the greens. The two wings were separated by the vertical strokes. Also circular motifs on the butterfly were varied, while the frontal ones appear redish and bigger than others at the top left.

In life, there is nothing static as such no man is predictable. A married woman may later change to a good or bad person. That is why the researcher painted the female head at the top left, to cast a shadow of what the woman is likely to become. This could be a positive change.



Plate XXVIII
After Marriage - 1999
Oil on Canvas
127.5 x 116cm

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

The painting of butterflies have always been in a representational manner in their natural habitat with flowers, birds, fruits, etc. There is however more to the butterfly than just the physical representation. For instance, the appearance of two different motifs on and beneath the wings of the butterfly helps the butterfly to escape from its preys. The phenomenon could therefore be used to form a philosophy in painting. It could be learnt from the butterfly that there are two sides to every issue in life.

Some objectives were set to embark on this research which include:-

a) to paint butterflies in their natural habitat.

b) to project the aesthetics of butterfly motifs

c) to adapt and transform the natural forms of butterfly motifs into stylised and - abstract paintings

d) to explore the possibility of evolving a new painting philosophy inspired by the phenomenon of two different motifs appearing on and beneath butterfly wings.

To realise these objectives efforts of some artists who have used butterflies in their works were reviewed. Also a number of butterflies were collected for sketches and drawings which formed the data to this research.

Sixteen paintings were chosen and grouped into two major stages but with two components as follows:-

a) Representational stage

I) Exploratory - flowers and butterfly in landscape.

II) Forms and motifs.

b) Developmental stage

i) Total transformation

ii) Figural infusion

The first stage was more of representational portrayal which helped to realise the first and the second objectives. The second stage appeared philosophical and more of abstract to express the two sides to every issue. The second stage addresses the third and fourth objectives.

5.2 CONCLUSION

There may be the need for modern artists to return to nature, to take a keener interest in areas that appear mundane but on closer scrutiny exhibit a wide variety of exciting discoveries. Working with butterflies was a wonderful experience. It brought awareness to the richness of nature in terms of aesthetics. Through them students may learn a lot about the elements and principles of design. It was also a soothing experience, studying the intricate patterns and motifs of butterflies. One became so engulfed that sometimes the effect was even therapeutic. A second renaissance is desirable in art, and particularly in painting.

When more and more artists and the general public are encouraged to appreciate nature, chances are that environmental degredation may be slowed down or even completely halted.

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