HARNESSING FLOWERS FOR SCULPTURAL POSSIBILITIES

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled ***Harnessing Flowers for Sculptural Possibilities*** has been produced by me. The information derived from literature has been duly acknowledged in the text, and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any University.

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CERTIFICATION

This Thesis titled ***HARNESSING FLOWERS FOR SCULPTURAL POSSIBILITIES***, by Satsi Leni Eleanor, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Fine art (MFA Sculpture) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge, visual arts practice and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to all lovers of flowers particularly Mrs. S.B Satsi whom I have lived with all my life but never saw the depth of her love for flowers, until this research began.

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ABSTRACT

Africa has been portrayed by many scholars as a culture with an insignificant representation of flowers; the proof is in the non representation of flowers in the visual art domain. The research examines the 'floral gap' as postulated by Mazrui (2004) and the general assumption that flowers are western not African. Jowit (2010), reports that 'more than one out of four of all flowering species are under threat of extinction'. For this reason, there is a dire need for artists in Nigeria to respond to the environment and issues that pertain to it through artistic research. Five flowers have been selected; hibiscus, lily, zinnia, sunflower and rose; they are explored to create sculptures in relief and round forms to satisfy the canons of representational and abstract art. The approach of this study is studio-experiment, and culminates in a thesis describing the processes, materials and techniques applied in producing a body of work found in the catalogue. This study therefore, provides insight on the use of flowers in artistic inquiry in Nigeria, particularly in the field of sculpture. The purpose of this research is to promote a flower culture in Nigeria, making flowers a relevant subject matter in expressing thoughts and ideas in art. This was achieved through the following objectives: 1) select a group of flowers within ABU, Samaru campus for exploration in sculpture. 2) create representational flower sculptures composed into identifiable objects 3) explore parts of the flowers; its petals, sepals, pistils and stamens to create abstraction. Art is an important aspect of culture it has the power to influence society. Kleiner (2013) asserts that artists and architects can affect History by reinforcing or challenging cultural values and practices through the objects they create. By implication since the artist has been able to produce sculptures from the selected flowers, this research then serves as a platform for the promotion of a flower culture in Nigeria using art as a vehicle. It suggests to artists, government and other individuals the right attitude we ought to portray regarding flowers. Secondly a lot has been said about the non-representation of flowers in African art; however, little has been mentioned about flowers in contemporary sculpture in Nigeria. Therefore, this thesis will add to knowledge in the area of literature. Lastly, the researcher developed a chart showing the life cycle of a flower which is postulated on the basis of the Egyptian mythology of "life after death". It could be applicable to other artistic research that have to do with nature elements like insects, animals, leaves and a host of others.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Artists are often torn between representing nature or man-made objects. When an art piece is centred on animate things it goes by the name nature, or life, but when art is focused on inanimate (man-made) objects it is confined to the name still-life. Nature forms a major source of inspiration for artists and designers. Nature has been the preferential theme in creative art. Nature as described by the Word Web Dictionary (2013) is the natural physical world, including plants and animals, landscapes, vegetation, water bodies, clouds to mention a few. Where nature inspires a work of art, the form is either replicated or distorted yet bearing resemblance with the original form. Schwimmer, (2000) describes nature as a raw material. By this he refers to nature as inspiration (idea) for art and also the source of the different media an artist uses. Apart from representing nature, artists also make use of a variety of media like wood, skin, stone and wax in the execution of their art. These materials are all products of nature. A good number of African sculptures were made from clay, stone or wood.

Artists, both contemporary and traditional confirm the notion that there exists a relationship between them and their natural environment. Moffat (2007) opines that "the cave art of all social groups consists of five principal motifs: human figures, animals, tools and weapons, rudimentary local maps and symbols or ideograms". To further buttress this, Adams (2007) says "the upper Palaeolithic man produced a wide range of small sculptures made from Ivory, bone, clay and stone these depict humans, animals and a combination of the two". This can be seen in the examples listed below:

v. Venus of Willendorf (2500- 2000bc) a limestone statue of a woman.

vi. Two bison, France (15000-10000 BCE); a relief sculpture made from clay.

vii. The cave paintings and engravings of Lascaux (c.1500-10,000 BCE),

viii. Ritual Dance; engraving from the Cave of Addaura (10, 000 BC)

(View images at pp 62, 63)

In addition, Kleiner and Mamiya (2005) enthuse that "there are two questions that bother on the artist before beginning work: what shall be my subject? How shall I represent it?" In their opinion, the most universal answer to the first question was an animal – Bison, Mammoth, Ibex and Horse were the most common images of the Palaeolithic period. The cave man happens to be the first to express these natural forms as subject in his art.

How an artist comes about his subject matter is best known to him/her, there are no restrictions to the choice of subject matter in contemporary art. Artists are at will to choose for themselves what their subject matter should be. Adams (2007) opines that, subject matter is what is manifestly represented in a work of art- including figures, objects, narrative, shapes, colour and other visual elements. Sale and Betti (2004) state that "the figure (or human body as it is known in art parlance), has held centre stage for artists throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. The figure has been called the still-life of contemporary art".

During the last two centuries, the encroachment of Christianity, Islam, Western education, Market economies, and other colonial imports have led to increasing secularization in all the art of Africa (Kleiner and Mamiya 2005). These changes have to do with style, techniques, materials, philosophies etc. Not much changed as it pertains to subject matter. The relationship between Africans and the wildlife cannot be over emphasized. Traditional African art repetitiously, shows evidence of interest on the subject of the human being, and a host of animals like birds, lizards, tortoise and elephants. Most times these animals had some ancestral belief attached to them. The mythology of the Bamana people of Mali is an example. It tells the story of an antelope

named *Chi Wara* who first taught farming skills to humanity. Hence they produced a head piece adapted from the antelope. The headpieces were worn by *Bamana* society to represent the mythical agricultural animal during dances held at sowing and harvest times (African art museum, 2007). This relationship is also seen in several art traditions in Nigeria.

Similarly, broken fragments of the *Nok* sculptures of Nigeria suggest representations of complete human figure. The stone sculptures of *Esie* are vivid examples of the interest on the human forms, though rendered in an idealised proportion. *Ife* Artists produced highly naturalistic human and animal figures in bronze and terracotta. A few organic forms like snails and insect were found in *Igbo-Ukwu* art. Like the *Bamana* people, Nigerian Traditional artists were probably drawn to these forms for particular reasons they sought to satisfy through art.

The emergence of the non formal art centres like *Mbari Mbayo* in 1964 produced artists like Twin Seven-Seven who based their ideas on some of these natural forms. The introduction of Art into the Nigerian school Curriculum, through the combined efforts of Aina Onabolu and Kenneth Murray gave birth to the first generation of formally trained Nigerian artists that include Nigeria's renowned printmaker, Bruce Onabrakpeya (b. 1932). He experiments with form, in relation to Nigerian folklore, myths and legends. For example, his series of prints and paintings on *Ahwaire* the tortoise (Ekeh, 2005). Similarly, in the surrealistic paintings of Abayomi Barber (b.1934) plants and humans have been recurrent subjects. Other celebrated motifs in African art are; chameleon, crocodile, ant, lizards, birds, fish, elephants, snakes and a host of others.

Contemporary art in Europe is not any different; Kiki Smith (b.1954) is one of such artists. In the early 1990s, she adopted the life-size human figure including the different body fluids (e.g blood, tears and semen) as her subject (The Solomon R.

Guggenheim Foundation 2014). In like manner, Antoney Gormley (b.1950) expresses his affinity for nature. Many of his sculptures are based on his own body as a model (European Graduate School EGS, 1997–2012.) He seems to show a stream of unending ideas using the human figure in its simplified form.

There seems to be an imbalance in the treatment of nature generally because, the human form stands out as supreme; alongside animals and has taken centre stage over time. The environment consists of other elements aside animals and humans. It includes land, water and air. Cain (2001) reports that about 71% of the earth is covered by water while the remaining 29% is the sum total of Landmass, which is predominantly covered by vegetation. In the findings of Gordon *et al,* (2001) vegetation is grouped into flowering plants (angiosperms with about 260,000 species) and the non-flowering plants (gymnosperms). Angiosperms have a reproductive structure called flower. Apart from beauty, flowers have actually been cited to improve overall quality of life from their scent to their shape, they have the power to reduce stress, inspire creativity and lessen anxiety. Flowering plants are of great importance to humans as they have been used as natural air freshener, food, and medicine. There is a wide variety of flowers, such as lilies, sun flowers, magnolia, hyacinth, snowballs, roses and a host of others. Some are cultivated for ornamental purposes while some just grow on their own in the wild. Flowers are seasonal and bloom even in the desert where there is scarce vegetation.

According to Henri Matisse (1869-1954) "there are always flowers for those who want to see them." Flowers are inclusive in the endless list of raw materials that nature provides. About flowers, Kunz (2011) says a close-up view of flowers or plants are a never ending source of beautiful design. Gordon *et al* (2001), further describes flowers as brightly coloured, sweet smelling and oddly shaped. From this assertion, flowers therefore, bear the following obvious characteristics which could prompt artistic inquiry.

1. Bright colours: the Rose flower for example is known to have variety of colours; there are red, pink white and yellow roses.
2. Fragrance: pleasurable to both humans and animals.
3. Interesting shapes: some are conical like tulips, others are tubular, star-shaped or funnel-shaped.
4. Vary in size: the smallest flower is the water meal, It can weigh about 1/190,000 of an ounce, equivalent to two grains of table salt and the largest is , the titan arum, or "corpse flower" which is about five feet tall
5. Natural patterns: as observed in the petal arrangement and the lines formed on these petals; some patterns are radial, symmetrical and spiral.
6. Structural divisions: flowers have four major parts namely, petals, stamen, pistil and sepal.

For these basic attributes, artists have found them an interesting subject. However, flowers have been perceived as a Western concept, and more likely to be expressed in two dimensions. The research is focused on investigating a seemingly less representation of flowers in African art, and particularly in the area of sculpture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Available literature shows an abundant representation of flowers in European, Oriental and Islamic art but Africa has been portrayed by certain scholars as 'deflowered' (a culture void of flowers). The above assertion is in consonance with Mazrui (2004) who opines that 'there is a "floral gap" (insignificant representation of flowers) in African culture'. Contrary to this, Africa is a home to many flower species. The Kenyan embassy in Japan (2014) reports that, "Kenya has become the European

Union's biggest source of flower imports" making it one of the world's greatest producer of flowers. The problem of this research therefore, lies in the less representation of flowers in African art and in contemporary Sculpture, especially in relief form in Nigeria. There is a nesed for Africans and Nigerians in particular to explore flowers as a subject matter in sculpture so as to promote a flower culture in Nigeria.

The "floral gap" consequently, symbolizes extinction; in accordance to the law of use and disuse (use it or lose it) as propounded by Charles Darwin (1809-1882). If flowers are not included in our art, there is a likelihood of its extinction among Africans perhaps with the exception of Kenya and a few other cultures who relate with them in terms of economy, food and medicine.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to promote a flower culture in Nigeria, making flowers a relevant subject matter in expressing thoughts and ideas in sculpture.

This research is geared towards portraying flowers as a subject for artistic inquiry in Nigeria. Floral types, colours, shapes, sizes, patterns and so on, have been considered for exploration in a variety of media. The researcher hopes to achieve this through the following specific objectives:

- **i.** select a group of flowers within ABU, Samaru campus for exploration in sculpture;
- **ii.** compose sculpted flowers into identifiable objects and
- **iii.** explore parts of the flowers; its petals, sepals, pistils and stamens to create abstract compositions.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions are generated from the objectives

i. What flowers are available to the artist for exploration within ABU, Samaru campus?

ii. In what ways can sculpted flowers be composed into identifiable objects?

iii. What will be the outcome of exploring parts of the flowers in creating abstraction?

1.5 Justification of the study

It is sad to know that more than one-in-four of all flowering plants are under threat of extinction (Jowit, 2010).

When nature is destroyed it means that the artist is on the losing side, since nature is a "raw material" in the hand of the artist. Extinction, adaptation and evolution occur and distort nature. Vrey (2011) elucidates that "humans do not have the ability to work in perfect harmony with nature". When roads, buildings and dams are created; they prevent specific rivers from flowing freely, which prevents bird species from visiting particular streams for food. This is likely to inhibit the pollination of a specific flowering plant and eventually lead to its extinction.

One way of putting flowers into positive use is by approaching them as inspiration for art as seen in the works of Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), Henri Matisse(1869-1954), Eduardo Catalino(1917-2010), Antone Bruinsma(b.1958), Georgia O'Keffe(1887-1986) and Choi Jeong Hwa(b.1961). The existence of flowers and its aesthetic qualities may be enough to inspire floral forms appearing in the sculptures of contemporary Nigerian artists in the light of which, this research is relevant.

1.6 Significance of the study

Artists, in recent times, have made themselves relevant by responding to issues that bother on the environment. Three African artists are already involved in the environmental issues of waste management. Kainebi (b.1964), Anatsui (b.1944) and Ekpe (2012) have harnessed waste cans and bottle tops and turned them into remarkable, artistic statements. Global warming and its consequent extinction in plants and flowers, is one of such environmental problems contemporary Nigerian artist should look into. This research will perhaps be a pointer to other artists to adopt flowers in producing sculptures. It will open up possibilities for contemporary Nigerian artists to look into environmental issues and proffer solutions to them in their art. The result is that artists will be keen on nature (flowers) as a subject for artistic inquiry and expression. This research considers agencies who aim at preserving nature through art, some of which are artist groups, to understand their mission and their contributions to the field of art, they include; Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF) and The Wild Life Art Society.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study is focused on using physically observable features of a flower, for example: its petals sepals, pistil and stamen in producing sculptures. To achieve this, the artist limited the exploration to four media; wood, fabric, aluminium and metal sheets. The research presents flowers in representational or abstract form and produces both relief and sculptures in the round. Five flowers found within Zaria have been selected for this study. They are; Sunflower, Rose, Zinnia, Lily and Hibiscus. They were selected randomly on the basis of colour, size, shapes and petal arrangement. Some other attributes have informed their selection. Hibiscus for example is selected for its

relevance in the study of Biology at the Secondary level of education in the whole of West Africa. Of recent Sunflower has attained an economic value, it is now a cash crop and individuals are encouraged to cultivate them for export. Zinnia and lily may not have such values but while lilies are rare on the Campus community the Zinnias are largely populated and growing wildly without any regard. The last flower, Rose, is selected for its popularity all over the world.

Furthermore, colour, size, petal arrangement and shape are factors the researcher considered in choosing the flowers. The Zinnia is the smallest while Sunflower is the largest. Rose flower grows into a bulb, Hibiscus and lily maintain a funnel shape, while Zinnia and Sunflower are both disc shaped. To cover a colour variety, yellow Sunflower was selected alongside red Hibiscus and white lilies. Zinnia and Rose are both pink colour though having different intensities.

1.8 Conceptual framework

This study is centred on the Egyptian belief in life after death. This is so because flowers are short lived and under threats of extinction. The Egyptian mythology says "death is not the end of life but a transition to a similar existence or another place" (Adams, 2006). Egyptian artists made figurative sculptures that served as surrogates for the soul of the dead (*ka*). Death for flowers may mean its metamorphosis into fruits or death in the real sense. If flowers would live on, they needed similar, three-dimensional forms as "surrogates" to transcend them from death to the new life else, the soul (*ka*) would transcend without a body to live on. Though this belief was applicable to humans only; this research treats the flowers as humans (having the ability to die). This research will give them an opportunity to live in the new life, in the sculptures that have been

produced. As these sculptures live, it is hoped that they will inspire another generation of flower sculptures. This means the purpose of conservation or documentation would have been accomplished and "life after death" sustained in this belief. This concept is explained in the following chart.

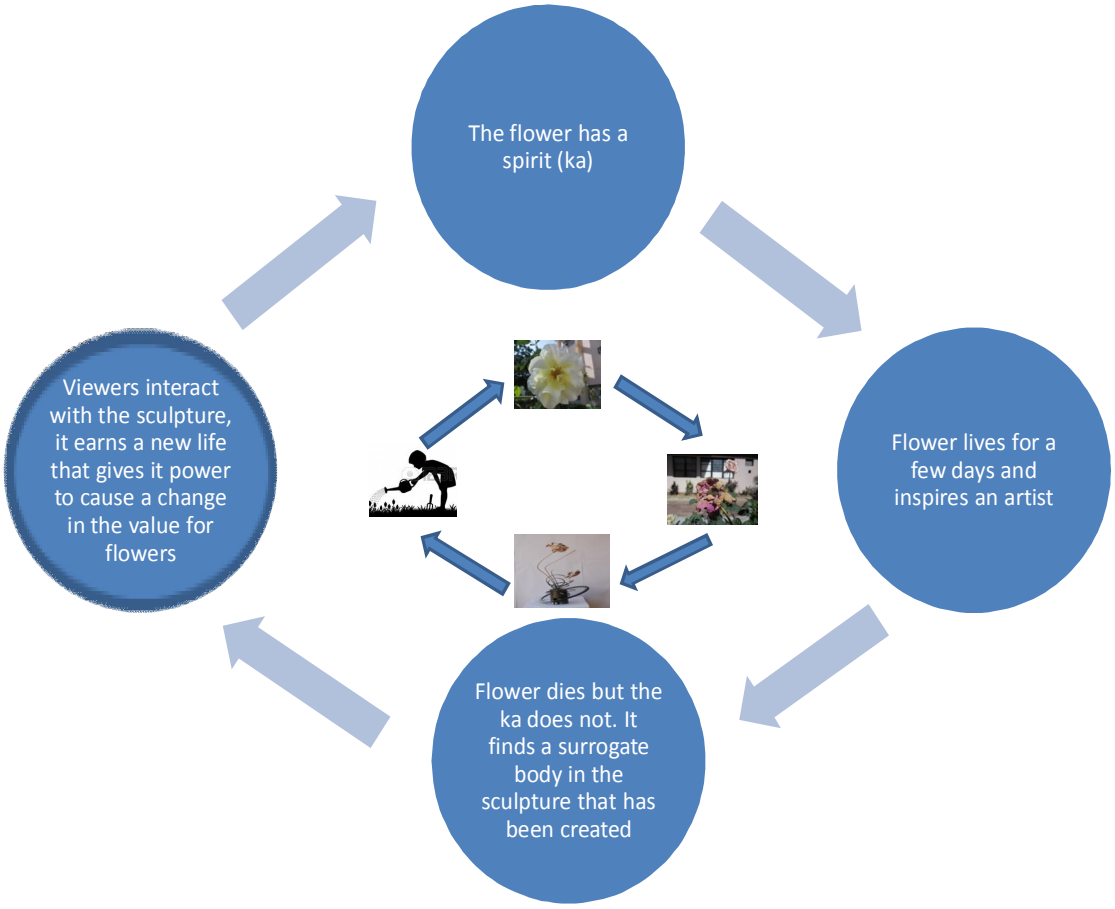


Fig.1: Life cycle of a flower.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1Introduction

This chapter is divided into two segments. The first is a review of literature and the second is review of artworks.

2.2 Review of Literature

Aside food and medicine other functions of flowers are seen in their use as religious, cultural and national symbols or emblems. Some flowers have historical significance like the Tudor. Falsetto (2010) revealed how the Tudor rose came to be adapted by royalty in England; the House of Lancaster used the red rose as its emblem, while the House of York used the white rose. The War of the Roses was fought between the two houses for England's throne. Afterward, when marriage joined the houses, the roses were combined to make the Tudor rose. In Nigeria, the Coat of Arms is dotted with some flowers; the *coctus spectabilis* that grows wildly across Nigeria, emphasizing the beauty of the nation alongside her agricultural potentials supported by the green grasses.

In sculpture, flowers have mostly been rendered as embellishments in Baroque, Greek and Egyptian architecture and sculpture. Lotuses form top columns in ancient Egyptian architecture, and are religiously significant to the Hindus. Roman architecture and figures were occasionally accompanied by flowers.

This research considers the contributions of artists who have been inspired by flowers. It takes inspiration from life flowers, found in Zaria, Nigeria, where the research is situated and attempts to address flowers in three-dimensions, naturalistic or abstract. This research draws the attention of Nigerians (artists and other individuals) to the subject of flowers as a genre for artistic discuss. The idea of flowers in art is not

new, but is inexhaustible. While artists of other regions, Asia, America, and Middle East have a great display of flowers in their art, this may not be same in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. The likes of Jeff Koons, Zoe Bradley, Eduard Catalino and Yayoi Kusama are examples of artists who have depicted their value for flower. Like minds in Nigeria may be difficult to come across. This gave room for the research to explore flowers not as motifs for walls and body decoration, as is our custom, but as three dimensional art forms. The research considered possibilities of reducing the flowers gradually from whole, and making component parts of a flower the focus for composition especially in the last phase of studio exploration.

In the Western world, people have used flowers to express their feelings, enhance their surroundings, and to commemorate important rituals and observances. Flowers reflect in music, books, paintings, sculpture, ceramics and tapestries. Some of the most opulent examples of source material are the flower paintings, produced by artists during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, which depict flowers in their incredible beauty not forgetting the extensive studies by Georgia O'Keffe in the twentieth century. Floral forms have found expressions in Oriental, Islamic, Baroque, and Rococo art.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent (30,065,000 km²). It covers approximately 20% of the Earth's land and 6% of the Earth's surface position on the globe and can be divided into five different climatic zones, all of which have supported plant life (*naturalhistoryonthenet, 2007*). Yet, Africans have perhaps not been able to show their affinity for flowers like they have done with animals and humans. Goody in Mazrui (2004) has strongly argued that;

> Although Africa is rich in plants, African culture is not fascinated by flowers… the peoples of Africa did not grow domestic flowers, nor yet did they make use of wild ones to any significant extent in worship, in gift giving or in the decoration of the body… But what is perhaps more surprising is that flowers; neither domesticated nor wild, play so little part in the domain of design or the creative arts.

This is evident in the fact that in the vocabulary of most African languages there is what Mazrui (2004) calls a *"floral deficit"* of names for specific flowers. In his opinion, one possible explanation to the underutilisation of flowers in African art would take us back to Bertrand Russell's assertion that "civilization was born out of the pursuit of luxury." It is possible to see civilisation as simply a relentless quest for beauty; it has resulted into innovations in music, architecture, fashion, religion and so on. These were probably not the needs of Africa before colonization. Being ignorant of the need for luxury could be a reason for Africa's inadequate attention to flowers. These are some of the issues Mazrui (2004) projects in his *"floral gap"*.

There is a sense in which Africa's attitude to flowers may have been organic rather than aesthetic. Mazrui (2004) further explains that so many flowers in the region were potential fruits in the process of formation. A seed planted begins to germinate into a plant; the plant produces a bud; the bud blossoms into a flower, and the flower culminates in a fruit. Africa celebrates the end product (the fruit) rather than the intermediate stage (the flower). Decorating the yard with flowers was not an African tradition, the people of Africa were known to sweep the yard clean and plant trees around to provide shade, sometimes cactus were used to fence the compound and not necessarily for any ornamental purpose.

Though flowers can be spotted anywhere today in Nigeria, in homes and public places it is still surprising to observe a passive attention on them especially in the visual arts. There is a Nigerian Horticultural society but its activities do not seem to capture floriculture in recent times. In response to this question: Don't Nigerian girls appreciate flowers as gifts? Appaville (www.nairaland.com, 2008) responds "No, I think this is as a result of upbringing, how many families in Nigeria bring up their children in a flourish environment? it is assumed that the white women like flowers for this reason; right from

birth they see flowers around them, in their homes, outside and everywhere". Another thought is that some Nigerian girls feel that the flower will perish fast, but other items like money or gold gifts can be used several times. This signifies that there is also an economic factor associated with the appreciation of flowers that has resulted into a culture where flowers are alien to the people.

The above mentioned factors may have resulted in the absence of flowers as a genre in African art. Consequently, because flowers have occupied a trivial position in our visual art domain, there is likelihood of a faster extinction among us judging from the findings that many flowers get extinct before they are even discovered (Jowit, 2010).

Most of the works that have been reviewed for the purpose of this research are from cultures with long thriving flower traditions. The Egyptian civilization is known to have exhibited a tradition that celebrated the blue water lilies. In their mythology, it was used at festivals and funerals. In their architecture, painting and sculpture, they have depicted the lilies to a large extent. Indeed, Pharaohs once adorned their war carts with flowers before heading off to war, while even peasants adorned themselves, their animals as well as the coffins of their dead with various flowers (Howard, 2011). He further explains that they were given as gifts of love and worship, to lovers and gods. According to Egyptian mythology, the ancient Egyptians used to sing for the lotus in their parties. That Notwithstanding, flowers were often depicted as part of a picture frame but rarely as a subject of its own, many of their gods were rather symbolized by several animals like the falcon, snake and lion.

It should be noted that according to John (2006), the flora of South Africa is one of the richest and most distinctive in the world. However, despite the abundance of flowers in Africa, has not drawn her people to this subject for artistic expressions. Perhaps, for the reason of colour, more artistic researches have been carried out in the

area of painting compared to sculpture as it concerns flowers on the globe. Jim (2001), states that "...It might surprise you to know that the painting of flowers dates back only about five hundred years". Hans Memlinc, a fifteenth century Dutch artist is credited with having painted the oldest surviving floral image around 1485. In 1888 a renowned impressionist artist Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), made famous the sunflower, and may have been one of the first to embrace the temporal nature of floral beauty. He presents them in all stages of their life, some strong, upstanding, vibrant, some limp and wilted, nearly dead. "Woman Reading" (1894) and "Red Room" (1908-1909) are also good examples of Henri Matisse's (1869-1954) exploration with the flower form. In Nigeria, Jerry Buhari (1989) did an extensive study on flowers which culminates in a set of paintings documented as *Floral notes*. African literature writers like Ken Saro Wiwa and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have made a mention of flowers in their works *A Forest of Flower* (1995) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2000) respectively. All these put together may not be sufficient for comparison with either Europe or China.

In an attempt to understand and demystify the subject of flowers, researchers have come up with names like horticulture and floriculture. Similarly, in the visual arts, the subject of flower can be studied under genres like nature, still-life, landscape, repeat pattern, imaginative composition etc. In the case of sculpture the research exploration results in three dimensional works of art. Colour may not play any significant role in this research but unfortunately, Hollander, (2000) "argues that colour which is thoroughly explored in the art produced by flower cultures was carefully limited in African art to a small range of infinitely variable shades of brown, black and white, with some red. These were human, animal and earth colours". By this judgment, Africa is exemption. Hence, the desire to investigate the "*floral gap"*.

2.3 Review of Artworks

The review of artworks began with Egypt where two artworks have been selected. One is selected from Zimbabwe, four from artists of Asian origin and the remaining eight from Europe, Australia and North America.

2.3.1: Egyptian architectural columns

Egyptians were known to make gigantic pillars for their temples. These pillars were usually embellished with motifs and sometimes painted. Some of them bore engravings of hieroglyphics. Most of the temples were structured with pillars which were carved out of stones; plate (i) is an example of such pillars. It is embellished with the lotus flower in a semi- abstracted or stylized form, from the temple of Amon Karnak of the new kingdom. Tcherkez (2004) reveals that the lotus is a symbol of purity because the flower bloomed just above the water and was not sullied by mud.



Fig.2 Egyptian Architectural Columns,

2.3.2: Boy emerging from a lotus

This is one of the archaeological findings from an ancient Egyptian pyramid tomb depicting the bust of a child springing out of a lotus flower. It was made from wood and painted in full colours of human skin tones. The statue is likely to be Tutankhamen of the 18th century dynasty at about 9 or 10 years of age. The public remembers him today because of the chance survival of his tomb's furnishings (Kleiner and Mamiya, 2005). It was rendered in agreement to Egyptian style and principles of the Lower Egypt. It stands as a

proof to the myth of the lotus.



Fig.3 Boy Emerging from Lotus limestone. www.tour**egypt**.net/featurestories/columns.htmALLPosters.com(1580-1200BCE),

2.3.3: Sango's Flower

A good number of Zimbabwean artists belonging to the Shona group have explored stone in recent times. Edward Sango is one of such artists. He was born in 1975 (zimscuplt, 2014). The manner in which he has represented his flower is very African. It is stylized and non representational. The sculpture resembles a human figure with a large head similar to the idealized proportion of African sculpture but Sango says it is a flower. Perhaps the twist and ridges around the ball that seems to represent the petals suggests plant life, growth and continuity. It was chiseled out of stone and polished to a shine showing good mastery of art.



Fig.4: Onward Sango, Stone, Opal, 42 cm/16.54″. **Source:** zimsculpt ltd**.**

2.3.4: Breathing flower

The *Breathing Flower* was created by Choi Jeong Hwa. It is an enormous lotus flower formed from sheets of red fabric; it is one of Choi's signature pieces, in which a vinyl lotus: an installation blossom slowly inflates to bloom, then collapses. Jeong Hwa (2012) describes this sculpture as a large lotus which appears full of life, its petals slowly inhaling and exhaling, simulating the movement of a live lotus flower floating on water. He further explains that, in many Asian traditions, and religions, particularly Buddhism which is widely spread among the people, the lotus symbolizes the spiritual path a person takes through life towards enlightenment. This work of art is part of "Phantoms of Asia: Contemporary Awakens the Past", an exhibition at the Asian Art Museum across the street. The artist made a conscious effort to bring to mind the role of this flower that has been displaced by man especially in urban centers, little wonder the artist brings them to the streets, closer to humans so they can get to feel them and be inspired by its motion.



Fig.5 Choi Jeong, (2012), Civic Center, San Francisco**,** Fabric with LEDs motor
Source: the creator's project

2.3.5: Floralis Generica

One of the fascinating features of this sculpture is that it opens to reveal its six petals and the strands of pistil hidden inside. It is a complete flower and acts like a real one by evoking emotions in its viewers. Its gigantic petals open during the day and closes for the night with a red glow emanating from within. There are four special nights a year where the petals remain open: 25th May, 21st September and the 24th and 31st of December.

The flower is made of stainless steel and aluminium and sits in the centre of a pool of water and the pool provides a distance from vandals. It is powered by an electrical configuration; it has the ability to pick reflections of objects and activities around because of its metallic colours. The sculpture is located at the middle of the United Nations Square which is a walk-able distance down the hill from the Recoleta Cemetery, Argentina.



Fig.6 Eduardo Catalano (2002), 23x16 or 36, stainless steel, Argentina
Source: BuenosAires- Argentina.com

2.3.6: Rhythm of Love

Antone Bruinsma has specialized in producing sculptures for landscapes, urban spaces and private homes for over 25 years. The rose is one of his works in the flower series. Flowers which we know to be fragile and temporal has been rendered in a naturalistic approach in a medium as durable as stone. According to Ross and Gibson (2004), the rose is presently located at the Brisbane botanical garden, a site Bruinsma owns and manages by himself. The sculpture sits against the background of a natural environment with trees and grasses. Hardly would a rose be as large as this but the artist has been able to record for posterity what a rose really looks like, though this might not have been the intension of the artist**.** The rose flower is highly celebrated and symbolizes love; it is cultivated all over the world and comes in varieties of pink, yellow and white. This particular rose flower is striped pink and grey and gets its colour from the stone itself which as been buffed to a lustrous finish.



Fig.7: Antone Bruinsma, (2005), stone, size unknown, Brisbane- Australia
Source: Scultptsite.com

2.3.7: The Lily; Federal Triangle Flowers

Stephen Robin is a native of Washington, District of Columbia; he is nationally known for his work in architectural embellishment and representational sculpture. He is the creator of the sculpture known as Federal Triangle Flowers, for the Woodrow Wilson Plaza, located between the historic Ariel Rios Building and the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Centre. The Federal Triangle Flowers are comprised of two parts – one of which is a single lily. The cast-aluminium flower was installed on limestone pedestal on one side of a circular opening in the plaza. This is another rendition of flower showing all its parts: six petals, the style and filaments, at the peak of its bloom. Notable in this work is the rendition in neutral colour of silver. The absence of colour does not give away its identity as a lily; it exudes the elegance of a lily in reclined pose. Its colour is one reason it could even go unnoticed, but has given it an advantage that it occupies some space yet in a manner that is not offensive, it appears light and yet concrete and occupies some space.



Fig.8: Stephen Robin (1997) aluminium , 148 / 365 ,
Source: ipernity 2007-2014

2.3.8: Promise to Flower

Ric Leichliter's "Promise to Flower" stands on the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue. This sculpture suggests a different understanding of the subject of flowers. This sculpture comprises three flower bulbs at the top of three long grotesque stems that resemble the letter h. The emphasis is not the stem but the flower as suggested by the title of the work. The artist, who is known to have developed an appreciation for found objects of interesting sizes and shapes, has produced this sculpture out of such intuition. The title also suggests a pledge or commitment which could be related in the fight or struggle to preserve flowers or give them a role that is more permanent compared to that given by the society.



Fig.9: Ric Leichliter (2012) Metal, 19" x 11" x 13, Michigan- USA
Source: News herald newspaper

2.3.9: Koorida's Two flowers

The works of the Japanese artist Masayuki Koorida captivates the viewer through their simple and at the same time unusual forms. They remind one of an amoeba because of the biomorphic approach in representing the idea. It is chiselled out of granite and polished to a shine. They have perfect curves and are part of a series distributed on the wide Kurpark meadow. Due to their similarity with eggs, they create the impression that it is likely to dissolve or shatter if handled roughly. They seem fragile and yet stable in themselves, artificial and yet alive. Their titles identify them clearly as "Flowers" or "Seed". They are play sculptures engaging children who consciously or unconsciously have something to learn from the sculptures. Flowers are usually friendly, inviting and irresistible. Children will definitely be unable to resist a little moment of fun on these sculptures.



Fig.10: Masayuki Koorida. (2005), Granite**,** Unknown size, Yorkshire- United Kingdom
Source: www.jontlywild

2.3.10: Adiss Flower

Zeidan's art is a mix of abstract in a minimalist approach. This sculpture received an award at the Abu Dhabi International Sculpting Symposium (Adiss). The Flower of Adiss combines two stones, the black granite which forms the base and a combination of grey and white from which the flower is formed. This is one out of many sculptures that points us back to our responsibility to nature.

The sculpture suggests an organic fusion, union of culture, union of people, organic movements inevitably connected to man, to birth, to germination, to love, to the sources of life. The circle or ring suggests a relentless change, movement which flowers represent as the organ of reproduction in plants. If every living thing can reproduce its kind then there'll be continuity. Charging and discharging of forces towards aims and shapes, creating and undoing, often joining and tearing up of materials, signs of continual metamorphosis, expression of interior energy or genetic forces.



Fig.11: SalwaZeidan, (2010) Mugla White – Marble, 250cm, Width 194 cm x Depth 97cm, Dubai.
Source: www.onefineart.com/en/artists/salw**zeidan**

2.3.11: Balloon Flower (Blue).

Balloon Flower (Blue) is one of Koon's' most important outdoor sculptures and belongs to his acclaimed and beloved *Celebration* series, which has contributed to the artist's global status and taken his market to the highest level at auctions. There are only five Balloon Flowers in existence, each a different colour. Koon's' *Celebration* series is inspired by the trappings of holidays, birthdays and other special occasions. The artist is known to render his works with brilliant reflective surfaces and vibrant colours that suggest a perpetual cycle of happiness and optimism. Jeff Koon's blue flower was executed sometime between1995-2000.The piece is made of high chromium stainless steel with transparent colour coating, 133 1/4 x 112 1/4 x 103 3/8 inches.

Images of flowers have played an especially important role in Koons' work over the course of his career. *Balloon Flower*, for Koons, specifically commemorates the springtime when blossoms begin to grow, and the optimism that accompanies that moment of the year. As Koons once stated, "I have always enjoyed flowers. Since taking art lessons as a child, I have had flowers in my work. I always like the sense that a flower just displays itself. The viewer always finds grace in a flower. Flowers are a symbol that life goes forward."



Fig.12: Jeff Koons (2000), Painted Steel, 133 1/4 x 112 1/4 x 103 3/8 inches
Source: www.christies.com

2.3.12: Echo

This shimmering stainless steel, spherical form creates ever changing shadows by day. In the evening it is back lit with a subtle glow, accentuating the attraction of a flower. It allows us to see through to the other side, it interplays negative and positive spaces. This flower is simplified into planes and joined at a point to form what looks like a ball. It shares resemblance with a snowball flower that is easily lifted by the air and can fly across a distance in the wind; unfortunately this flower is static and may never be able to fly. The artist expresses his passion in these words "I just want to make something that someone will want to look at more than once"- Hodges Fine Art, 1980-2012.



Fig.13: Chris Hodges, *Echo,* Stainless steel
Source: www.mosman.nsw.gov.au

2.3.13: Kusama's flower

She is known with her unrivalled eye for colour, pattern and sinuous baroque form Yayoi Kusama developed a set of colourful Flowers following major permanent sculptural commissions for public institutions that include The Visionary Flowers (2002) in fig. 13 below. These large sculptures are made with fibreglass reinforced plastic, metal and all-weather urethane paint *that causes it to glow at Midnight.* Kusama was born in Japan where she must have gotten acquainted with flowers and must have been inspired by the oriental arts before she moved to New York in 1957, where she became associated with abstract expressionism. Polka dots have become her trade mark; they really do make a disparity from the flowers we know.



Fig.14: Yayoi Kusama(2002), Fibre glass, 71 x 71 x 105 inches
Source: Yayoi Kusama studio Inc.

2.3.14: Star Flower

This bronze sculpture was commissioned by the Irving Arts Centre in 2007 and now sits in its sculpture Garden reflecting on the pool. Star Flower is one of the three sculptures commissioned at the opening of the sculpture garden in 1995. Flowers are everywhere and a part of human life, sometimes the sculptures do well to represent the natural one as is the case of this flower. It is a composition of several flowers, each of them in the star shape with a projection at the centre to represent the style of a flower. This arrangement might not be achieved with natural flowers; it therefore means that flower sculptures go a step further in helping us achieve particular floral arrangements.



Fig.15: James Surls (2007), Bronze, 13' x 13' x 13,
Source: www.jamessurls.com

2.3.15: **Zoe's collections**

Zoe Bradley is a contemporary artist, with a touch of classical beauty making numerous colourful and fascinating flowers. She is found to be working across two disciplines; fashion and sculpture. She employs traditional tailoring techniques but offers a twist using more conventional materials of fashion fabric and luxury paper. She's also an artist people love to work with because of her flair for theatrical display. Known for her beautiful paper flowers which she uses to make huge statements, she inspires awe with windows filled with massive paper flower arrangements cascading in every direction; she makes elaborate fashion venues filled with flowers. It's no wonder she's sought out by some of the most prestigious luxury brands like Louis Vuitton and several clothing companies to create installations and exhibitions for galleries and window displays world over. This is one of such installations from Bradley. For her everything comes with flowers.



Fig.16: Zoe Bradley (2006)
Source: 2008-2014 design swam

2.4 Analysis of Literature/Artworks

All the sculptures from Reuben, James Surl and the others that have been reviewed have one thing in common, i.e. the flower form. They have been rendered in various materials and techniques; paper, bronze, stone and mild steel, the artist selected them because of the form. Eduardo Catalano, Steve Robins and Chris Hodges chose to render their flower forms without any colours. This is not to say that it is the best way of representing flowers but that with or without colour the identity of the form is not lost. This is quite different from what we see in the works of Jeff Koons, RicLitcher, and Yayoi Kasuma. Deducing from their works, flowers should be represented in their colours probably because flowers are remembered for their bright colours. It is important to note that sometimes these colours are symbolic; they express certain feelings, as even natural flowers take their function from their colours (for example the red rose symbolizes love)..

Four flowers made from stone have been reviewed Salwa Zeiden's ADISS flower, and those of Edward Sango, Masayoki Koorida and Antone Bruinsma to illustrate an ironic relationship between stone and flower. Though stone is seen as one of the most durable materials these artists have used them to express the fragility of flowers.

The lotus in the life of Choi Jeong and other Asians all over the world is worthy of note. This research will be inspired by such significant yet silent roles flowers play as identified by the researcher while trying to make social commentaries like Zoe Bradley does.

In terms of technique, this research has produced stable sculptures as opposed to Eduardo Catalino. His floralis generica, is made to function mechanically. It replicates

life flower, having the ability to open and close at certain times of the day and on special days. It presents certain truths about flowers. Flowers are not static, they move, their colours are attractive, their sizes and shapes form variety. These are some of the ideas that informed the studio work.

In the light of Kusama's idea, sculptures designed for children should consider factors like colour, texture, subject matter and habitat. This she has been able to portray in her play form. Flowers play a vital role in communication; their symbolism is one aspect artists should never fail to recognise. Bradley freely uses them to invite people to occasion venues.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information about the methods and processes utilised in the course of the research. This study is a studio based research where the researcher is free to explore different media and techniques while gathering information at every stage as the research progressed.

3.2 Sources of Data and Materials

The major content of the data collected for this research are flowers. A group of flowering plants growing within Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Samaru campus both in residential and public places have been identified for the study. They are Hibiscus, Rose, Lily, Sunflower and Zinnia The researcher had to take several trips around the Campus to locate and document them before processing the data for the production of sculptures.

The researcher considered two strategies for data collection which include; the primary and secondary source.

1. **Observation**: Observation is the primary source of data. It is essential for drawing; it is the starting point for artistic research. The availability of flowers gives the researcher an opportunity for close observation of visual features like their petals, pistil and stamen, the arrangement of the petals and their behaviour at different times of the day. Also, their different stages of development the buds and the blooms were observed. Photographs also form part of raw data collected on the subject. Some flowers were documented as photographic images with the aid of a digital camera. The observatory

stage resulted in a series of sketches that were further developed from the data collected. This step provides for a proper understanding of the subject matter.

2. **Secondary sources**: consists of data that have been processed outside the knowledge of the researcher; they include images collected from books, magazines, internet, fabrics, wall papers, sculptures, drawings and paintings that had previously been produced by other artists and designers.



Plate 1: flower study, Artist sketch book (2012)

3.3 Experimental Study

Having set out to achieve the goals stated in the objectives, the researcher started by carrying out a pilot study. In this stage the researcher tried out various media, observing their responses and results. A set of miniature sculptures were produced that form the foundation from which other sculptures emerged. The studies in this preliminary category comprise of flowers in representational or stylized form, showing their characteristics/ features.

In order to ascertain what medium was suitable for the research Paper, Resin, plastics, fabric, sheet metal, zinc and aluminium sheets were experimented with. It was observed that the materials provided the researcher with the freedom needed to manipulate and form them into the intricate folds and curves known to accompany flowers, The results revealed that, they seemed suitable for small works and in any case an artist could use them in large scale sculptures with adequate re-enforcement or otherwise use metal sheets which are available in different gauge depending on the strength desired for the work.

Considering that artists are concerned with form and their habitats, sheets of metal and aluminium turned out to be the preferred medium as they could withstand any weather condition and will be suitable for both indoor and outdoor purposes. The artist decided to discontinue the use of paper, fabric and plastic. Below are images from the experiments.

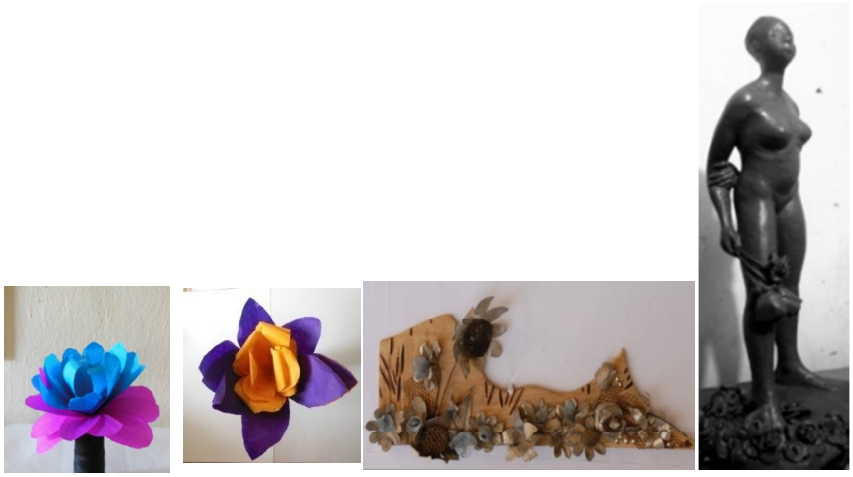


Plate 2: Images from studio experiment (2011/2012)
Source: Artist

3.4 Procedure

Flowers have been best described as organic forms but in the task of transforming sketches into concrete three dimensions a little of geometry had to be considered.

Identifying them by a shape was necessary so that they could be broken down and grouped for the best results. For example; the said Hibiscus flower is funnel-shaped, sun flower is disc-shaped, meaning that it is flat with petals in a circular arrangement. It therefore, became mandatory for the researcher to produce templates at some point. The petals, receptacles, stalks, stamen and pistil were constructed as separate entities and later coupled together to form a single flower. At the representational stage, the single flowers were grouped together to form a composition. The research procedure is highly dynamic and so faces a lot of changes to accommodate the thoughts and ideas of a particular sculpture. The following steps happen to be general, especially at the initial stage of the research.

1 Drawing and cutting of templates on paper.

2 Tracing the templates on the material i.e. aluminium and metal sheets.

3 Cutting of aluminium and metal sheets.

4 Forming them into the desired shape.

5 Cutting of iron rods, straightening and bending to suit the composition.

6 Welding of the sheet metal and iron rods or joining the aluminium sheets by riveting after which resin or araldite was used to fill up gaps.

7 Finishing; this entails dressing, filling, smoothening and application of patina.

In executing these sculptures the researcher divided the studio work into two stages of execution. The works in each category are similar based on their style and techniques of realisation. They are as follows: I. Representational stage II. Abstract stage

3.5 Execution of works

The studio process was divided into two:

a. Representation stage b. Abstraction stage

(a) Representation Stage

Representational art is also identified by the names Naturalism or figurative art. It depicts the appearance of things. Frank (2006) elaborates that it presents to us once again objects that we recognize from everyday world. This form of art is measured in its degree of resemblance to what is obtained in the real world. Artists express this to varying degrees; it could be super-realism as seen in the works of the Roman and Greek sculptors like Caravaggio or simply sharing resemblance with the natural form. To a large extent the flowers in this category will be replicas of the natural ones. At this stage the flower will be identifiable in terms of size, shapes and structure.

The researcher attempts to depict the existing relationship between humans and flowers or flowers and insects. The human figure is considered as the background on which the flowers gain some value for their beauty. Humans are often times involved in activities like picking flowers, presenting them as gifts, assembling them, smelling them and so on. This relationship is what we see frequently and can associate with easily. Human response to flowers is very natural. Therefore, the natural feeling that is gotten from a live flower is hoped to be retained at this level of study. Some of the compositions reflect identifiable house hold items, with emphasis on movement and rhythm suggested by lines.

(b) Abstraction Stage

The researcher tries to extract the essence of the subject of the research in creating ideas. Abstractions could refer to works that depict natural objects in simplified, distorted or exaggerated ways. In order to reveal or emphasize certain qualities, an artist is free to change the natural appearance of the subject. All abstractions in this study will be keen on exploring the component parts of the subject matter, treating them as

individuals. The result is an indirect loss of identity for the form; abstraction allows artists to conceptualize and build ideas without limitations.

The flowers go beyond naturalism or surrealism; they are represented based on perceptions and thoughts built by the researcher in the course of studying the forms. Some of these thoughts are either in line with the temporal nature of flowers, their petal arrangements or disparities in petals of different flowers. Here, the researcher intends to proffer a different outlook on the subject of flower from what is familiar with in everyday life.

3.6 Description and Procedure of Executing Works

Apart from the general processes earlier mentioned, there are procedures peculiar to each work. However they will be discussed based on the groupings for the stages of production i.e.

i. Representation stage – PLATES I-VIII
ii. Abstract stage –PLATES VIII-XVIII.

PLATES I-XIII: The stalks of all the flowers were made from iron rods of different sizes and lengths after straightening and bending them on the work bench and anvil. Each petal was replicated from a template traced unto aluminum sheet. They were later cut out with scissors and beaten lightly with a mallet to form the shapes. After cutting the sheets of aluminium, reverting was applied as a technique to hold the form in place. To hold the stalks to the petals and sepals, the artist prepared a gel coat with resin and plaster of Paris. It was stuffed into the petals to hold the stalk and its petals in place. Afterwards the stalks of the different flowers are then welded into the different compositions as conceived by the researcher.

The choice of patina for these set of works was subject to the researcher's discretion as she determines what suits the works in as much as resemblance is significant to this stage.

PLATE XIII-XVIII: More of mild steel was used at this stage and this implied more of welding instead of the use of resin to hold parts together. After cutting and filing the sheets of metal, they were beaten into the desired shapes, welded and filed before giving it a surface patina

CHAPTER FOUR

CATALOGUE

4.1 Introduction

From the body of work produced, eighteen have been considered to make up the catalogue. They are discussed in the following categories

4.2 Representation stage

4.2.1Bouquet

This is a collection of fifteen stalks of different flowers; Hibiscus, Lily, Sun flower, Zinnia and Rose of different sizes and at the peak of their bloom. The flower petals are made from sheets of aluminum and bound unto metal stalks with resin. The individual stalks are arranged in a mixed grill in an almost cylindrical flower vase designed in a patch-work formation from rectangular or square pieces of sheet metal. In order to enhance the work, the researcher has introduced some colours, an antique finish was achieved when the painted surface was later wiped with thinner on a piece of cloth. The arrangement is similar to what is done with cut flowers; they are arranged in their different heights, yet in a pleasing manner.



Plate 3: **Bouquet**, 71 cm, Sheet metal, 2012.

4.2.2 Grief

Two different material make up this composition, the base is made from wood, and the flowers themselves from metal. It comprises seven stalks of different flowers. Zinnias are small in size compared to sunflower but in creating imagery, the researcher has interchanged the size of the zinnia for that of the sun- flower and vice- versa to give it another status. Four flowers are placed in up-side-down position and only the zinnia in its usual upright position, they have been painted in tones of their natural hues. The flowers were produced by riveting aluminum sheets to the stalks and dressing with resin.

Flowering plants are inhibited by their peculiar problems; diseases, malnutrition or human activities could result in mal-formation, discolouration or perforations on petals and leaves. In some cases the flowers are greatly affected that they wilt and even dry up and are unable to complete their life span. As humans struggle for survival, so it is with plants and only the fittest survive. Observing flowers in this condition inspired beauty out of pain or grief, in this composition the arrangement does not seem appealing,



Plate4: Greif, 68.5cm, mild steel, 2012.

4.2.3 Spiral Roses

Wind action is suggested in spiral lines, they suggest continuity. Flowers symbolize the continuity of life. Many plants depend on the wind for seed dispersal and pollination. While storm looks destructive to plants, it is also beneficial. It is amazing to see flowers gradually spring back to their bloom after a wind action. The spiral lines represent the wind and the entire work represents the relationship between flowers and the environment as a result of their being together.

This work comprises two fully bloomed rose flowers painted in a pale tint of pink that appears almost white. The two flowers are seated on spiral stalks that run from the top down to a cylindrical base, where they meet with several other stalks (all assuming the spiral flow).

Pink roses represent friendship and partnership a relationship built between people as they interact. Everywhere, people make friends; we make partners in business, in sports and other aspects of life.



Plate 5: **Spiral Rose**, 71cm, Mild steel, 2012

4.2.4 Umbrella

The object represented in this composition is an umbrella, bearing several flowers. The flowers have been used to wrap up an umbrella. The researcher sculpturally represented the resemblance of a flower bulb turned upside down to look like an umbrella. The top of the half –way opened umbrella is dressed with a small lily that serves as the junction or the source of the several stalks of the flower. From the small lily a thick rod extends upward and is curved at the end to form the handle of an umbrella. It is an umbrella and at the same time a collection of flowers, an umbrella provides us with comfort, beauty and scent. Flowers are found around our homes, offices, schools, hostels, hospitals to mention a few. The artist has depicted some irregularities in the flowers and despite their disparity in types they sit together to provide shade and comfort which are among the things flowers provide for us. If we are not careful, we may not see some of the things that flowers do for us.



Plate6: Umbrella, 68.5 cm, Sheet metal, 2012

4.2.5 Uncertain

In executing this work, life flowers were placed on a surface and the outline was drawn, the patterns were traced on metal sheets and cut out. Afterwards the patterns were beaten into no specific shape and joined together to form the composition. Antirust was applied and later, paint as a final finish. It is a wavy, horizontal composition; the sculpture sits in a landscape format on the wall. A group of stylized petals concentrate on the left side and reducing in number towards the other side which ends in a thin wavy rod that represents the filament. It is also painted in a dark red tone on the left and gradually fades into a pink towards the right.

When people present gifts, they are uncertain about the response. The same is applicable to flowers. More so, flowers intended for some purposes have been interpreted wrongly. People feel differently about colour, likewise flowers, and one would have preferred white flower instead of pink but the giver has presented pink. It is also uncertain what we can get from flowers. Sometimes raising them in the best conditions does not guarantee their survival. There is also no certain period for their life cycle, they would just last a couple of days at best. These are some of the uncertainties of flowers; we understand them but only to an extent.



Plate 7: Uncertain, 68.5 cm, Mild steel, 2012

4.2.6 Crucifix

This work constitutes two subjects, flowers and butterflies which tend to be comparable in their bright colours. In this work, the butterflies are submerged into the flowers and represented with single wings and a pair of antenna; neither the flowers nor the butterflies are distinct because it has been painted black and grey, the grey colour is derived from the primer that was first applied, subsequently the black was sprayed. Many times one look at flowers and focuses on them forgetting all other things around. The flowers and their pollinators are inseparable; in executing this work they have both been made from flat sheets of metal welded together in the form of a cross to symbolize the importance of their meeting which is equally as important as the crucifix is in the Christian faith. The petals were made from sheet metals cut by tracing the outline of the selected flowers and beaten into the irregular shapes welded together in the cross formation. The butterflies' wings were also cut from sheets of metal and welded at the left and right side of the cross.



Plate8: Pollination, 76x50 cm, Sheet metal, 2012.

4.2.7 Broom

Broom is very symbolic in the African culture it forms part of the gifts presented to a new bride in many African traditions. There are even taboos against using a broom at night to sweep and using them to flog a young unmarried girl in several African cultures. Vacuum cleaners are beyond the reach of an average Nigerian. Brooms are part of a typical African home; it is used to tidy the home which means it is used for the "dirty jobs". A collection of a few flowers into a broom like bunch, dropped somewhere in a house could do well to enhance the already tidied environment. After cleaning the next step is decoration a little of it makes a difference and flowers have done well to spice up our homes. The concern here is that Africans could gather broom sticks together for sweeping but couldn't gather flowers in the same manner and just gaze at them in their homes when it has the power to liven up and relax its occupants. The work is a careful arrangement of iron rods of different thicknesses to form a relief bunch held together by a band. Some of the strands that form the bunch extend from the band to end with some beautifully shaped flower at their tips.



Plate 9: Broom, 81 cm, Sheet metal, 2012.

4.2.8 Name your price

The question of floral beauty cannot be generalized, for some people there is nothing as beautiful as the rose. Visiting a flower garden can leave one confused, it is a subjective debate. A Yoruba proverb says “a flower that is too beautiful should be cut off” but how do you get to ascertain which one is “too beautiful” but beauty they say is in the eye of the beholder. This piece of art elaborates this situation using the sunflower; its seed pod is represented by a mesh which makes that area transparent to whatever surface it sits on. The art piece turned out to be susceptible to several surfaces and environment. The shriveled and uneven petals are made from sheet metal and painted in a shade of orange making it look like a wild fire. The naira sign attached to the flower symbolizes a blank cheque, individuals are free to name their price for this flower does not belong to one place, it is universal, it grows everywhere round the world in different species and yet cannot be named “the most beautiful” how beautiful a flower is dependent on the viewer.



Plate10: Name your Prize, 56 cm, Sheet metal, 2012.

4.3 Abstract Category

4.3.1 Concerted

Individual petals of flowers were studied and they formed the basis of this work. Based on observation, these two flowers, Zinnia and Sunflower which are the inspiration for the work both have a centrifugal petal arrangement, the petals have been reduced to simple planes, and the concerted arrangement presumes a force pulling everything to the center. It bears the colour of the sunflower which is bright yellow. This work reminds us of the federal system of government practiced in Nigeria, where power is concentrated at the center, it looks like people at the center have more to benefit that is why everyone desires to be closer to the centre (Abuja). Flowers should be given a concerted attention that goes beyond mere admiration. First the artist drew on the flat sheets of metal following the sketch that was produced. Secondly they were cut out, filed, welded and painted in bright yellow.



Plate11: Concerted, 55x45 cm Inches, Sheet metal, 2012.

4.3.2 Concave

If you have been looking at something from the front, you think you know its back but it is not true, because you have not looked at it from the back. Most of the flowers turned upside down appear concave. That is the part of the flower that people rarely look at, the frontal beauty is so captivating that they are always carried away. After arranging the petals to form a dome it calls to mind items that are by nature concave like calabash, hat, dish, balls etc. Sometimes we should get to see the other side to things happening around us, surely there are two sides to a coin. While some flowers have pleasing fragrances, some do not while some are edible others are poisonous.

This abstract composition comes from petals of rose, zinnia, lily and sunflower, made out of sheets of metal. After beating them into shape , they are welded together into dome- like form. Instead of just leaving them plain, red patina was applied as surface finish. The petals are uneven, irregular and distinct; no two petals are the same. The beauty of the work is in the dome shape that is not completely covered, there are spaces in between the petals, which allow one to see through as if you were seeing through a basket.



Plate 12: Concave, 53cm, sheet metal, 2012

4.3.3 Reincarnation I

Re-incarnation is common to many African societies, humans reincarnate and in flowers the researcher likens this to cross pollination, hybrids and variations. The birth of

a young one in time of death signifies the dead coming back to life. This young one will usually share or exhibit characteristics of the dead and bear the dead man's name which is a proof of him coming back to life. Some flowers tend to look strange, maybe larger than usual or orange instead of the usual red because of cross-breeding and some genetic mutation .This biological processes produce incarnates of the parent plants sharing only some attributes. This sculpture cannot be described as lily or hibiscus.

It is the artist's hybrid it may seem like a strange appearance but certainly a flower. A long thick metal suggests the stalk that extends into the corolla where there is an unusual arrangement of petals. Black identifies the African continent, the colour has been used to enhance and emphasize the issue of re-incarnation which is real, and concrete to an average African



Plate13: Reincarnation I, 74 cm, sheet metal, 2012

4.3.4 Re-incarnation II

Out of three large petals comes a small flower at the centre with several strands of metal that represents the style. The little flower is more or less an “epiphyte”, growing on another flowers petal yet not inhibiting its existence; rather it is enhancing and adding some aesthetic values to it. These strands are curled and project from the flower to the outside world. Nature has a lot to give out, they reach out to us but our responses do not match their gestures, however, they continue to exist, they persist and metamorphose into something else, probably with resemblance to what the artist has produced.



Plate14: Reincarnation II, 70cm, sheet metal and iron rods, 2012

4.3.5 Zig-zag

There are three disc-shaped planes in this composition. Each one has zig-zagged lines at the point where they almost meet each other. It represents the patterns resulting from cluster of flowers, overlapping each other indicating their tolerance for one another. In human relations tolerance is also very important. Zigzags may not necessarily represent friction and negative vices as we have always perceived them to be. In this case it represents boundaries, humans should be mindful of boundaries between them and nature. Instead of infringing on nature, there should be tolerance. Space in art allows for a better appreciation of a work of art, for this reason the work is small in size and best suited for a broad space, the planes have been painted in bright colours for which flowers are best known



Plate15: Zigzag, Sheet metal and iron rod, 2012

4.3.6 Multifaceted

This is a piece with multiple views, invariably a sculpture in the round; it is both concave and convex. It expresses the many uses of a flower. Having two sides, this single composition also has attachments of two young flowers on either side. It is made from metal and made to assume a grey- green- metallic colour which is symbolic of agriculture. The work was inspired by a study of the hibiscus flower after the rain, the rain drops just hang there on the petals for some time before they finally drop, this the artist has also tried to portray in the surface treatment. Both the rain and the flowers are important to the farmer, farmers look in anticipation for the first rain; and as the plant germinates, they also wait anxiously for them to bloom; the blooms are signs of fruitfulness. Many flowers are useful for their fragrance, their beauty, their medicinal value and for food; it is possible that one flower has this multiple functions.



Plate16: Multifaceted, 50x53cm, Sheet metal, iron rods and bearings, 1012

4.3.7 The fall

As soon as flowers begin to bloom it is expected that in a short while they begin to fall too, some translate into fruits for fruit trees, while the others just fall to mark the end of their season. “The Fall” is a view of a section of flower petals that have fallen to the ground. One important thing is the spaces that occur within the frame the interplay between the bare ground and the petals, this leaves a natural balance for the work to exist without much input from the artist in creating the composition. Amongst the petals are also stalks and dried leaves that form an interesting composition flowers could also be interesting when they fall. The fall is symbolic of a short lived life. Day after day, the average life span of a man has continued to decline.

The sculpture is a juxtaposition of several petals of different sizes and shapes, put together in a rectangular picture frame. They are painted in a flat grey colour and mounted on a flat wall.



Plate17: Fall I, 58.4X76.2 cm, Sheet metal and iron rods, 2012.

4.3.8 Fall II

This is another interpretation of petals falling to the ground, the neutralized peach or orange colour is symbolic of a stage where flowers are assumed to have completed their circle, after this a fruit is expected to emerge. When humans die at a young age it worries the society. In many societies in Africa the death of an old man or woman is marked with celebrations, a lot of feasting and dancing. Death will only be beautiful at a mature age. As opposed to fall I, this second fall is a fall in maturity it is something that is celebrated. Stencil was first produced on paper from which the five exaggerated petals were cut on mild steel, filled and hammered into curve. The individual petals were then coupled into a relief composition.



Plate18: Fall II, 66cm, Sheet metal, 2012

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The discussions in this chapter are majorly on the findings from studio exploration, and conclusions from literature. The artist also makes recommendations for further studies.

5.2 Findings

Ahmadu Bello University, Samaru Campus is endowed with a variety of flowers from which the researcher was able to select five for the study. The flowers vary in colour, shape, size *et cetera*. Among the flower population on Campus there are cultivated flowers as well as wild ones. The researcher selected four cultivated flowers and one wild for the study.

Having explored flowers in representational and abstract form, this research was able to compose the flowers into four identifiable objects; bouquet, umbrella, broom and crucifix. It is based on this finding that the researcher states that flowers posses numerous possibilities for creating art. This is just one of the ways flowers could be composed. There are also possibilities of exploring them in other different media and techniques.

Parts of the flowers were explored. Eight sculptures that formed the abstract stage were the result of this exploration. These sculptures were made by composing petals of different sizes, the sepals, pistils and stamens of the selected flowers. These abstractions could be suitable for architectural embellishment on window frames, gates, burglary proofs, ceilings and bare walls. Fall (I) is one of such examples, the artist detached the

parts of the flowers and puts them together in a composition different from how they naturally appear.

5.4 Summary

Nature, which comprises plants, animals, hills, water bodies *et cetera*, have great influence on the artist and the kind of art he produces. A study like this is focused on nature and the environment as a source of inspiration. This study re-emphasises the role of artists as social critics. Artists also have a role to play in creating positive changes in the society. Kleiner (2013) asserts that artists and architects can affect History by reinforcing or challenging cultural values and practices through the objects they create. On the basis of this assertion, this research exploits art as a medium to promote a flower culture in Nigeria.

Two problems have been identified in this research, extinction and the "floral gap". This research has not been able to fill the floral gap in African art, or stop extinction. However it is a step in the positive direction. The study has provided a frame work, tied to the concept of life after death. By implication, this framework will allow individuals to interact with flower sculptures, it will inspire them to consider flowers for creating art and also inspire them to grow flowers and protect them. The research embraces the effort of Artist groups, governmental and non –governmental organistions and individuals who focus on conservation as an objective.

This research challenges the perception that flowers are subject for painting, textile and body decoration. Hence sculptors will now see the need to explore flowers as subject matter in executing their works. The studio exploration resulted in a series of sculptures out of which sixteen were selected to form the catalogue. The sculptures comprise representational and abstract works. Both free-standing and relief

sculpture emerged from the studio experiment, which have been discussed in chapter four. Out of a wealth of flowers around us only five were carefully chosen for this study.

5.3 Conclusion

The researcher is resolute about the words of Kunz (2011). He says a close-up view of flowers or plants are a never ending source of beautiful design. Artists like Bruinsma, Sango, Robin, koorida and Zeidan have found expressions in them. They have inspired works of great masters like Matisse and Van Gogh. They have functioned as important ingredients of the Baroque period. The subject of flower is not time bound, it cuts through the 16th century to the 21st, yet the inspiration is unending. There is still room for other artists especially sculptors and particularly in Nigeria where the subject matter is not been inundated.

5.4 Recommendations

African writers, poets, musicians and visual artists should be encouraged to carry out more research on the available flowers on the continent, to improve on our flower culture and add to the volume of literature. Issues like gender, feminism and religion are some of the areas that artists/ researchers could focus on in carrying out further studies on flowers. Individuals and government agencies should take up the responsibility to plant and nurture flowers everywhere for the numerous benefits we derive from them.

Flower sculptures should not be used to replace live ones. However, a symbiotic relationship between them and the environment should be maintained. The flower sculptures have been found suitable for both indoor and outdoor purposes. Therefore, it

is recommended for public places like schools, hospitals and offices as they could be used to embellish bare wall, floors and other surfaces.

It is important that while designing structures, Nigerian architects should consider introducing sculptures to their structures.

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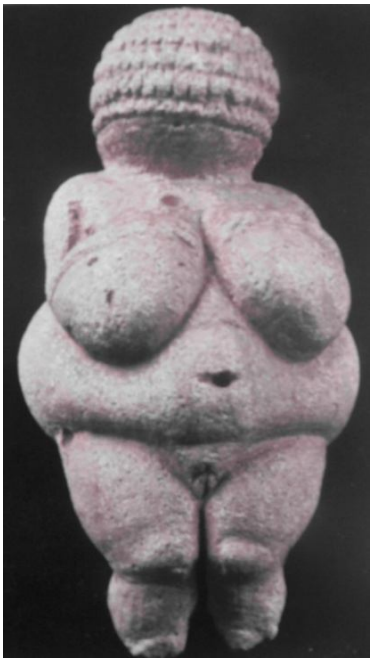
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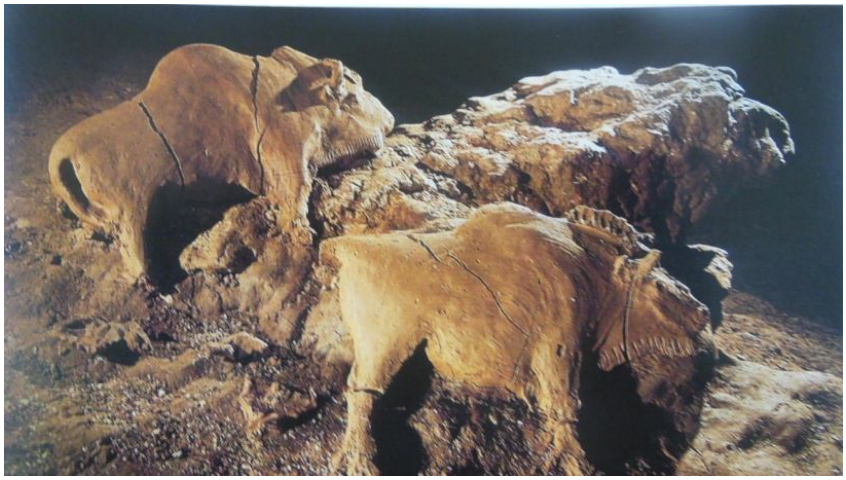
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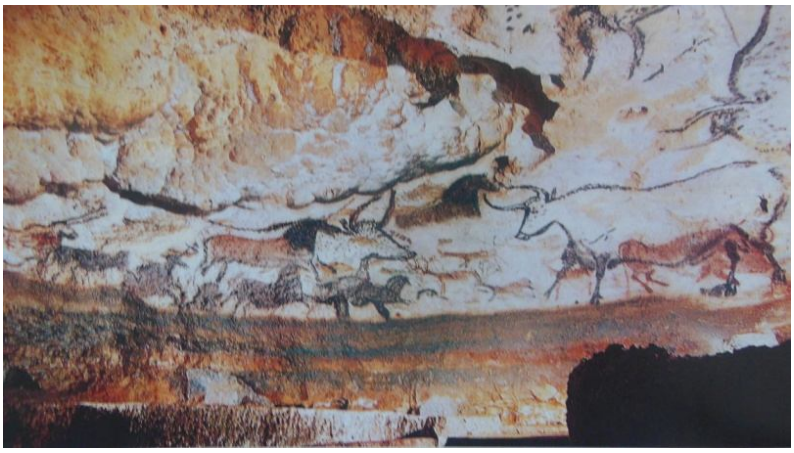
APPENDICES



Apendix 1. **Venus of Willendorf** (2500- 2000bc) a limestone statue of a woman.



Appendix 2. **Two bison,** France (15000-10000 BCE); a relief sculpture made from clay



Appendix iii, **The cave paintings and engravings of Lascaux** (c.1500-10,000 BCE),



Appendix iv, **Ritual Dance,** engraving from the Cave of Addaura (10, 000 BC)