DEVELOPMENT OF SHERE VILLAGE FORMS IN PAINTING: A TRANSFORMATION FROM REALISM TO MINIMALISM

BY

SHINDAI, GIDEON DAFAN
(MFA/ENV-DESIGN/40505/20004-05)
(N. C. E., Fed. Coll. of Educ., Pankshin 1992, B.A. Fine Arts, A. B. U., Zaria, 1998)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled ***"Development Of Shere Village Forms In Painting: A Transformation From Realism To Minimalism"*** is a record of my original research. It has never been presented elsewhere in any application for a higher degree. All quotations and information utilized and their sources are acknowledged by means of reference.

SHINDAI GIDEON DAFAN **DATE**

CERTIFICATION

This project entitled ***"Development Of Shere Village Forms In Painting: A Transformation From Realism To Minimalism"*** by Shindai Gideon Dafan meets the regulations governing the award of the masters of Fine Arts, MFA, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

Assoc. Prof. Muazu Mohammed Sani **(Chairman, Supervisory Committee)**	**Date**
Assoc. Prof. Jerry Buhari **(Member, Supervisory Committee)**	**Date**
External Examiner	**Date**
Assoc,Prof. Kefas Danjuma **(Head of Department)**	**Date**
Prof. Joshua Adebayo **(Dean, Postgraduate School)**	**Date**

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the Lord Almighty God who has granted me this artistic wisdom and to my late father Bulus Dafan Shindai, late mother Bilhatu Bulus Shindai, my brothers and sisters and my in-laws for their prayers and moral support. It is also dedicated to my loving wife Rachael Gideon Shindai for her care and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

Development of Shere Village Forms in Painting: A Transformation from Realism to Minimalism

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Shindai Gideon Dafan

Some aspect of art which has gained importance as a means of expression by artists over time is landscape painting. The presence of the natural and man-made features on Shere village informed the researcher to explore the possibility of developing and expressing these forms in an artistic language. Shere village landscape comprises of many natural and man-made land forms such as hills, mountains, rocky mountains, valleys, gouges, shrubs, rocks, rivers, ponds, gullies, cliffs, man-made dumps, lakes, the atmosphere, and of course the sky. The researcher was influenced by this event in nature. The motifs and forms on the Shere village landscape provided an artistic point of departure in painting. This study focuses on Minimalism as a means of expression. The exploration of landforms generally has been undertaken by various artists in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The researcher however, is not aware of any record of painting using forms from Shere landscape. The theory adapted for this research was minimalism. Minimal art was developed in the late 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America mainly as a reaction to abstract expressionism. Minimalism defines a simplification of forms in artwork and design. The review examined written literature and works done by artists on minimalist paintings especially landscapes and how they were rendered by minimalist artists, such as Kandinsky, Matisse, Klee, and Buhari. The review also validates the minimalist style by entrenching its philosophy. Collection of data was done by the means of study drawings and sketches from selected sites. Photographs were also used. These selected land forms and sites were developed and translated into minimalist paintings from their realistic state. This study was categorized into three (3) major stages; representational, developmental and abstract stages (i.e. minimalism). Twenty two (22) works were executed in the course of this research, presented and analyzed; they can be viewed in the plates provided. The findings reveal that there were unlimited forms to explore. In addition, a variety of colours could be explored which created interest. As a major contribution to knowledge the research serves as a document for posterity, a catalyst and source of inspiration to Nigerian artists to engage in paintings of their rich indigenous environments.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Some aspect of art which has gained importance as a means of expression by artists over time is landscape painting. Landscape painting is the representation of a panoramic view of the environment depicting such forms as; trees, mountains, hills, rivers, sky, houses, cars, electricity poles and wires, human figures among others. Aspects of landscape painting can be traced to prehistoric representations on cave walls of Altamira as recognized by Gardner (1980). Funk and Wagnall (1995) define landscape as "a stretch of country as seen from a single point." They further stated that it is "a picture representing natural scenery."

Similarly, landscape painting according to the Encyclopedia of World Arts, volume ix (1964), is "the type of pictorial representation in which natural scenery is the subject of or prevail over the action of figures, this also describes the rendering of natural scenery, painting forms, and colour which makes up the design elements of the landscape." Landscape therefore, can again be defined as a form of art which deals with the representation of a section of natural scenery or landforms.

Wikipedia informs us that "the word landscape is from the Dutch landscape, (the German cognate is *landschaft*) meaning *sheaft*, patch of cultivated ground." The word is said to have entered the English vocabulary of the connoisseur in the late 11th century. Furthermore, Hornby (2000) sees landscape as "everything you can see when you look across a large area of land, especially in the country."

Stylistic movements over time have represented landscapes in peculiar approaches. Among these movements are Renaissance, Rococo, Baroque, Realism, Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism, including Minimalism, which forms the basics of this research.

According to Encyclopedia Americana Volume 19 (1829), International Edition: "minimalism describes movements in various forms of art and design, especially visual art and music, where the work is stripped down to its most fundamental features and core self expression." Encyclopedia (Americana) further reiterated that the term "minimalist" is none objective art that attempt to reduce artistic decision making to a few logical choice. It can also refer to anything which is spare, stripped to its essentials, or providing only the outline of structure independent of the particular art movement, and "minimalism" the tendency to reduce to fundamentals. It is sometimes applied to groups or individuals practicing asceticism and the reduction of physical possessions and needs to a minimum." From the foregoing, minimalism which started in 1960 in New York is a movement in the arts identified with development in post-world War II Western Art, rooted in modernism and associated with post modernism. It is simply the simplification of an idea or form for philosophical and aesthetical consumption. This study focuses on Minimalism as a means of expression.

1.1 Background of the study

Remarkable contributions in various areas of art expression have been made by modern painters leading to inventions, discoveries and, the development of modern science and technology. The exploration of landforms generally has been undertaken by various artists in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The researcher however, is not aware of any record of painting using forms from Shere landscape.

The researcher had undertaken field studies including the review of exhibitions in Nigeria, exhibition catalogues, books, magazines, newspapers publications, but has not come across documented abstractions relating to Shere village landscape forms. In addition, there are in exhaustive variations in the physical environment within the geographical landscape of Shere village setting. It became pertinent therefore to look into this artistically Shere landforms.

Shere Hills of Jos are about 1,700 meters above sea level. They are located on the Jos Plateau in Jos East Local Government Area. The features of Jos Plateau include a flat area of almost about 8,000 sq. km which is elevated to about 1,200 meters above sea level. The Hills is ranked the second highest feature in Nigeria after Adamawa Mountains. Schoeneich and Mbonu (1991) submit that, "Shere Hills are said to be built up of granite rock formation which solidified from liquid magma, the depth estimated at about … 10,000 meters below sea level**".** This might have happened some 150 million years in the middle of the Jurassic period. He further noted that, they were tectonically lifted above the ground surface and long eroded by rivers and streams, leaving a beautiful and low landscape.

Schoeneich and Mbonu (1991) observe that geomopologically the landscape erosion formed over millions of years ago. Dip valley with steep slopes called "V" shape are also visible features in the Shere Hills rock formations. The main feature seen after further erosion presently may have been continually transformed after the elevation of the plateau some 60 million years ago. It may have been that during the period, the details of reliefs were modified both by dynamics of human and scientific exploration. The people who inhabit the Shere village prefer to be called the *Afizere*. However, they are popularly known

as the *Jarawa,* which is a derogatory term. Their occupation includes farming, (both root and tree crops such as cocoyam, cassava, yams ,both sweet and Irish potatoes, Acha, rice, millet, maize, guinea corn, *tamba* and most of the vegetable crops), hunting, pottery, weaving, carving and blacksmithing and, trading. The hills are said to provide avenue for relaxation and protection against external aggression on the Afizere people. Tin and columbite mining within the surrounding of the hills which flourished with the coming of the colonial rule around 1880 became part of their modern occupation. Furthermore, the coming of British traders following the discoveries of metal sticks by the locals around 1884 in Ibi town in Taraba state brought a larger invasion by the British soldiers. This generally paved way for the influx of workers and metal seekers that culminated into larger exploratory excavation work. This continued to cause further undulation of the terrain (Schoeneich and Mbonu 1991).

The lucrative tin mining activities or excavation on the Jos plateau in addition to the natural features on the landscape brought about with them the appearance of dumps, gorges, as well as artificial streams and lakes which were created from washing the tin and columbite (mineral ore). Shere village and its surrounding is highly endowed with beautiful vegetated Rocky Mountains. This includes: shrubs, rocks, hills, plains, ridges, mountains, lakes, rivers, and valleys. Some of the rocks are balanced as if tactfully arranged by man, one stone on another, creating artistic arrangement in the landscape thereby giving a general outlook of one of these most outstanding features in the Nigerian landscape.

The presence of the natural and man-made features on Shere village has informed the researcher to explore the possibility of developing and expressing these forms in an artistic language. Landscape

painting in Nigeria since the 19th century is influenced by the European way of presenting landscape as Okeke (1980) posits in Gushem (1990). "Landscape in Nigeria at the beginning of the 19th century was adulterated by the European cheap representation of British landscape art, in line with the contemporary freedom of expression and by painters" Gushem (1990).

Wikipedia notes that, "early in the 15th century, landscape painting was established as an art genre in Europe, as setting of human activities." This means that not until around the 17th century when landscape gained a place as an independent form of pictorial art, it was considered inferior to figure painting. Constable (1883) holds a view against "painting landscape that meant only to enhance the beauty of the figure." He further notes that, "under no circumstance should nature undergo correction". He however accounts for and justifies the diversity of styles in landscape painting by stating that just as in nature, where no two hours are the same, neither were there ever two leaves alike since the creation of the world, therefore, each valid work is distinct from every other.

The Encyclopedia.com views that the concept of early landscape painting in the West grew very slowly, where nature was traditionally viewed as consisting of isolated objects, long before it was appreciated as a scene or environment. Landscape as an independent art was a late development in the West. Many scenes from the Hellenistic pictorial painting of antiquity to the religious works of the 16th century A.D continued showing expansive landscape backgrounds, but they were usually subordinated within a narrative context.

The landforms of Shere village from which this study gained its inspiration exist with natural and man-made features. It is remarkably outstanding from within its surrounding. The painting possibilities inherent in Shere hills have stimulated the researcher to undertake this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It appears most available landscape paintings in Nigeria are realistic in style or rendition; attempts at other styles such as minimalism, in landscape painting are few, as observed by this researcher. An artistic transformation of degraded Shere landscape as a result of unfriendly human activities on this landscape by imbibing the minimalist approach offers a fresh perspective and inspiration to the representation of landscapes. This will bring to limelight man's unfriendly act (mining) to the environment by means of exhibiting the products of the research.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this researcher is to use a minimalist painting approach to depict Shere village landscape forms and its immediate environment. To achieve this therefore the specific objectives are to,

1. develop minimalist painting possibility of transforming forms from a study of the Shere Hill landscape from realism to a simplified state;
2. explore the aesthetics of Shere Hills landscape in painting medium ;

3. create awareness in society through exhibition of the paintings, on the need to respect nature and cultivate it rather than destroy it; and
4. record this research work so that man will realize the importance of conserving his environment for future generations.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is centred around the destructive activities of man on his environment and can therefore be viewed in the following way:

1. The study will act as a record of the grandeur and beauty of the Shere village land formations and its immediate environment for posterity.

2 The adaptation of the minimalist approach has a two-way significance in that since man's activities are ravaging the environment, and therefore minimalising the land forms, a minimalist painting approach is found most suitable to depict it.

3 Using a minimalist approach adds new impetus to existing knowledge in Nigerian painting which has a close affinity to traditional Nigerian art where simplification of forms is the norm.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research is limited to the study of Shere village of Jos Plateau State and its immediate environment. It is concerned with the exploration and development of landscape forms as inspired by the Shere village landscape.

1.6 Limitations

The Shere village topography consist of difficult terrain including deep mine pits, rocky high grounds, water logged ground and sharp outcrops and dangerous reptiles, all this constitute difficulties that the researcher encountered in the course of the research.

1.7 Delimitations

A major problem encountered was with the selection of sites considering the numerous sceneries, forms and motifs which could be used however; some suitable sites were cellected based on their shapes, physical appearance, motifs and aesthetics of the scenery for the purpose of handling this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theory adapted for this research is minimalism. Minimal art was developed in the late 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America mainly as a reaction to abstract expressionism. Minimalism defines a simplification of forms in artwork and design. Minimalist artworks "consist of geometric shapes or other simple forms" favouring use of basic colours arranged in an impersonal manner (Encarta Encyclopedia 2009).

It is these basic principles that have endeared this researcher to the minimalist approach; since in the landscapes emanating from this study are simplifications derived from the reality of the land forms which have already been distorted by natural phenomena and human activities.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS AND LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This review looks at written literature and works done by artists on minimalist paintings especially landscapes and how they were rendered by minimalist artists. The review also validates the minimalist style by entrenching its philosophy.

2.2 Minimalism

The term 'minimalism' is coined out of minimal to create an umbrella for such works that are produced with little concern about details but with primary focus on the object or subject. The idea is to reduced or minimalise to a primary idea.

According to Sayre (2005), Minimal Art "seems purposefully devoid of any feelings or content. It insists on itself for itself." Frank Stella (1960) puts it this way: "You can see the whole idea without any confusion…what you can see is what you see." Sayre (ibid), further posits that minimalism was a "reaction against Action painting," combining such elements as elegance, "notions of space-how the viewer relates to them spatially - as well as questions of their dogmatic material presence." From the foregoing, minimalism can be seen to be all about a pursuit of simplification and "tradition" as Gardner (1980) qualifies it.

In Nigeria, very few contemporary painters have explored the minimalist style in their expressions. The reason for this may be unknown, even though- traditional African sculptor's (carvings)

that influenced Picasso and other European painters are minimalist in style. These Nigerian artists include Uche Okeke and Jerry Buhari among others.

2.2.1 Artists and Minimalists' Landscape Painting

The biblical saying that there is nothing new under the sun presents itself in historic ways. In prehistoric times, cave men in their quest to survive practiced magic by drawing and painting on cave walls using blood of animals, bone marrow, flints, and chunks of yellow ochre as Gardner (2000) records. The stylistic results of such expressions have passed as minimalistic. This is due to the common elements analyzed in modern Minimalism figure i; (page 12) is a record of a Bushman's cave paintings from South Africa. The Numas Plateau Upper Brandberg painting shows a representation of a dominant built-like animal antelope on the top right hand of the space facing the representations of multiple nude human figures wielding weapons. There are arrows stuck into the chest of the gigantic animal. The human figures are smaller in size compared to the animal and sparsely positioned too. Colour usage is limited or simplified to only brown and black on both the figures and animal. One can find elements of minimalism at play in this work, as simplification is the main focus which this research is poised to achieve using Shere village landscape.



Figure i, Numas Plateau Upper Brandberg,
("The hunter and his art", Jalmir and Rudner 1970, P. 13)

Another work from the prehistory period is an "untitled" rock Painting (figure ii,). The painting shares an affinity with (figure i). It has sparsely represented nude figures mostly wielding weapons like bows and arrows in a circular kind of composition surrounding a rhinoceros-like animal. All the figures are in silhouette forms; suggestive strokes can be perceived around the middle of the space. Again, there is an emphasis on simplification, which is a key element of minimalism.

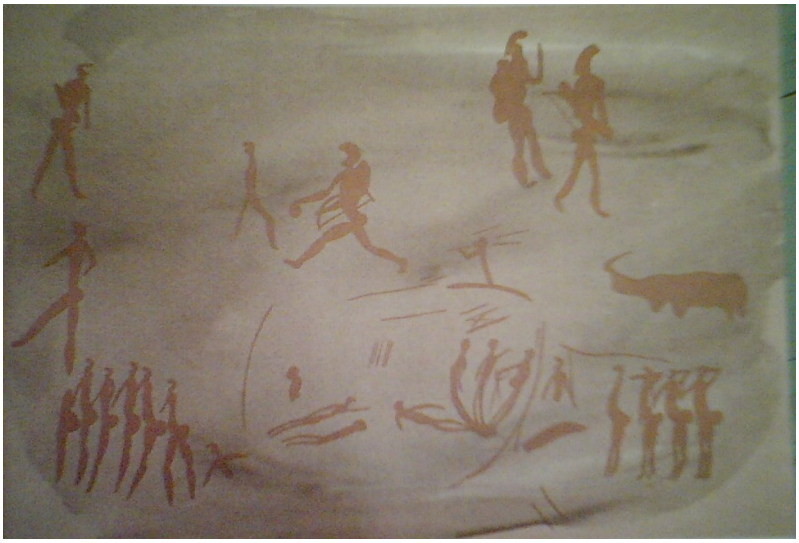


Figure ii, Cascade Shelter, Upper Brandberg,
("The hunter and his art", Jalmir and Rodner 1970, Pg. 19)

Claude Monet (1872), a French painter whose painting "Impression Sunrise" (figure iii,) was considered key to the birth of "impressionism", presents a simple painting depicting boats in a blue sea.



Figure iii, Claude Monet, **"Impression Sun Rise"** (1872), 19 5/8 x 25 ½, Oil on Canvas,
(Willian C. Seitz, 1984, P. 67)

"Impression Sun Rise" depicts a rising sun in orange colour with its reflection in the blue sea. The entire painting is dominated by blue. Images in the landscape dissolve in the atmosphere. In this painting, the colour scheme, the forms and perception are minimalised.

Another painting in which Kandinsky (1908) minimalised forms is the "Blue Riders" (figure iv, page 14). In the same approach as in "Train in Murnau (figure vi), colours are simply used to suggest forms on a landscape with the dominant white horse rider taking focus. Distant houses, spectators and the sky are seen as suggested forms.



Figure iv, Kandinsky Wassilly, **"The Blue Riders"**, 1908, Oil on Canvas, 52 x 54cm.
(Haws K. Raethel 1969, P. 59)

Henri Matisse (1869) was an abstract expressionist who's "Le Luxe" is shown in (figure iii page 15). According to Gardner (2000) they were "executed in the simplest methods." The painting depicts three nude figure against overlapping hills and background of separated colours. The entire figures are devoid of details thereby drawing focus on their formal essence. The simplification of forms here informs us of what the researcher hopes to do to the Shere landscapes, by reducing its reality to very simple artistic elements of form, line, colour etc.



Figure v, Henry Matisse, **"Le luxe ii"** 1907-08, Casein on Canvas,
(Modern Art, David Britt 1914, P. 16)

Wassilly Kandinsky (1909) in his "Train in Murnau" (figure vi, page 16) achieved minimalism through the use of colour patches of white, green, dark green, blue, vermillion, yellow etc. to represent forms of trees, houses, railway track", human figures and sky.



Figure vi, Kandinsky Wassilly, "**Train in Murnau"** (1909),
Oil on Cardboard, 36x49cm, (Hans K. Raethel, 1979, P. 69)

Kashmir Malevich (1911) a Russian artist presents another painting with geometric shapes and limited colour usage of blue, red and grey. The painting shows a reduction of the landscape depicting trees, houses and human figures to their simplest shapes. The reduction of the forms on this landscape suggests a cubist approach to simplification with which this research finds a common interest. "Morning in the country after Rain" figures vii page17 advances a novel approach by adding cubic dimension to minimalistic painting: The painting shows minimal application of colours and simplification of forms.



Figure vii, Kashmir Malevich, **"Morning in the Country after rain"** (1911), Oil on Canvas, 31½ x 3 ½ (Arvason H. H., year not noted, p. 229)

Karl Schimdt (1912), is another artist who avoided representing a religious or traditional detail but reduced it to simple forms and colours as evident in "Rising Moon" (figure viii,). The painting has a dominant warm colour of red complimented by stains of yellow and same grays and blue. The landscape captures houses, trees, the sky, and shrubs in their minimalised state, which is the interest of this research.



Figure viii, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff**, "Rising Moon"** (1912), 34 ½ x 37 ½, Oil on Canvas
(Arvason H. H., year not noted, p. 224)

Paul Klee, "painting with yellow birds" (1908) figure ix, is a minimalised painting in which the elements of birds, flowers in bright colours, other plants and a bright sky are all reduced to their basic shapes in flat colours. There is no attempt to communicate depth using tints and shades. The bright colours however create a poetic feeling.



Figure ix, Paul Klee, **"Landscape with Yellow Birds"** 1923, 14x193/8", Water Colour on Blackened Ground, (Will Grohmann, 1987, pg 70)

Milton Avery (date unknown) is an American painter also of the minimalist stock. Her painting "Swimmers and Sunbathers" (figure ix,), painted in 1945, is a simplified painting depicting a green scenery in the background, grayish hill dark river with red contrasting swimmers, while two white figures appear to be sunbathers on a beach sands. In this painting, an attempt at details is jettisoned while simplicity is upheld. Shere hills in the spirit of minimalism were simplified by a transformation from the representational.



Figure x**,** Milton Avery, **"Swimmers and Sunbathers,"** (1945), Oil l on Canvas, 28x481.8
(Arvason H. H., year not noted, p. 92)

In Nigeria, some artists have produced minimalised works. Among these is Jerry Buhari (1959), who teaches in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. His work "Gwari Pounding" Figure xi, shows a tall figure pounding in a mortar against a light source thereby presenting a silhouette of the figure and devoid of facial and figural details. The figure is set in the middle of trees that flow around it.



Figure xi, Jerry Buhari, **"Pounding,"** (1984), Oil, no support mentioned, 79 x 54cm.
(Jerry Buhari Thesis Report P. 81)

Hakin (2007) renders a landscape painting with a minimalist approach. "Hakin Haze" figure xii, has a very limited use of forms. Large sky, suggested vegetation spanning from the right and stopping halfway to reveal a distant river and horizon. The reddish foreground creates a colour balance to the dominant blue in the painting.



Figure xii, Judy Love, **"Mello sun set"** (2007), 22.75 x 30.5, Pastel on Paper,
(Kansas Masters International Arts Show 2007, p. 32)

Six Hayrolls II" by Patricia Dubose Duncan, acrylic on canvas, is another minimalised rendition. The dominant blue sky that stretches down close to the ground creating a distant horizon, compliments the yellowish ochre foreground that announces the hay rolls that catches attention in the painting.



Figure xiii, Patricia Dubose Duncan**, "Six Hayrolls"** (2007), 36x48, Acrylic and Charcoal on Canvas (Kansas Masters International Arts Show 2007, P. 69)

In conclusion, this review has so far looked at a selection of thirteen paintings of landscapes that employ some form of minimalism. The researcher has found it very interesting that all the minimalised paintings are mostly landscape rendition. This may well be because landscape formations endear themselves to minimalisation because of the numerous presence of land features such as rocks, boulders, gully, and vegetation. The Shere village which is the subject of minimalism in this research also contains the same features. Simplifying those features therefore is a pointer to the fact that it is necessary to cherished our natural endowments and protect them for now and generations yet unborn.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Shere landscape minimalisation is the focus for which this methodology is designed. The researcher in an attempt to simplify the land forms of Shere village, made field trips to the site where photographs were taken and made sketches. These were developed in the studio through further sketches in drawing, paintings.

3.2 The Data

The data for this research is the Shere village landscape and its immediate environment, the focus is on the land forms such as valleys, rocks, rivers, shrubs mountains, Gullies, dumps, and deep mine pits.

3.3 Data Collection

The following methods and means were used in gathering information; photographs, sketches and study drawing.

3.3.1 Photographs

Photographs were taken during the field work at the Shere village and its immediate surroundings. Motifs and forms such as trees, shrubs, mountains, rock formation, rivers, brooks, valleys, ridges, lakes, gorges, dumps, tin mining ponds, and viable spots were selected. A Camera was used in snapping the selected sceneries. The results can be viewed below in Figures xiv-xxi.



Figure xiv, 9.5x12.5cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005



Figure xv, 9x13.5cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005



Figure xvi, 8.5x18.5cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005



Figure xvii, 9x13cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005



Figure xviii, 9x13cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005

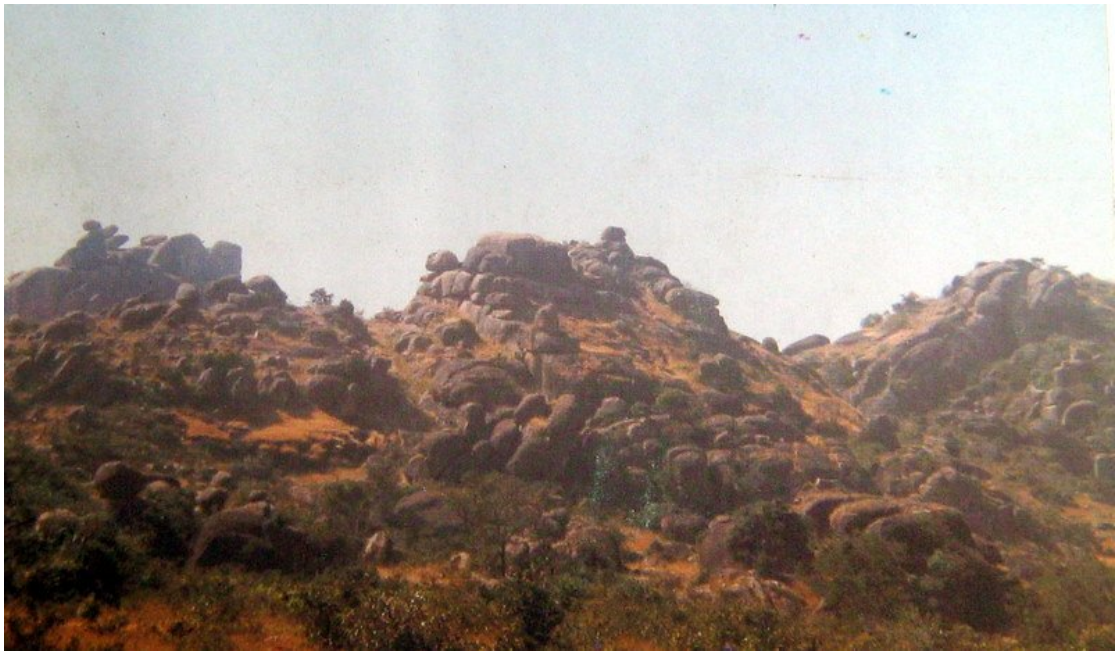


Figure xix, 8.6x14.5cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon,2005

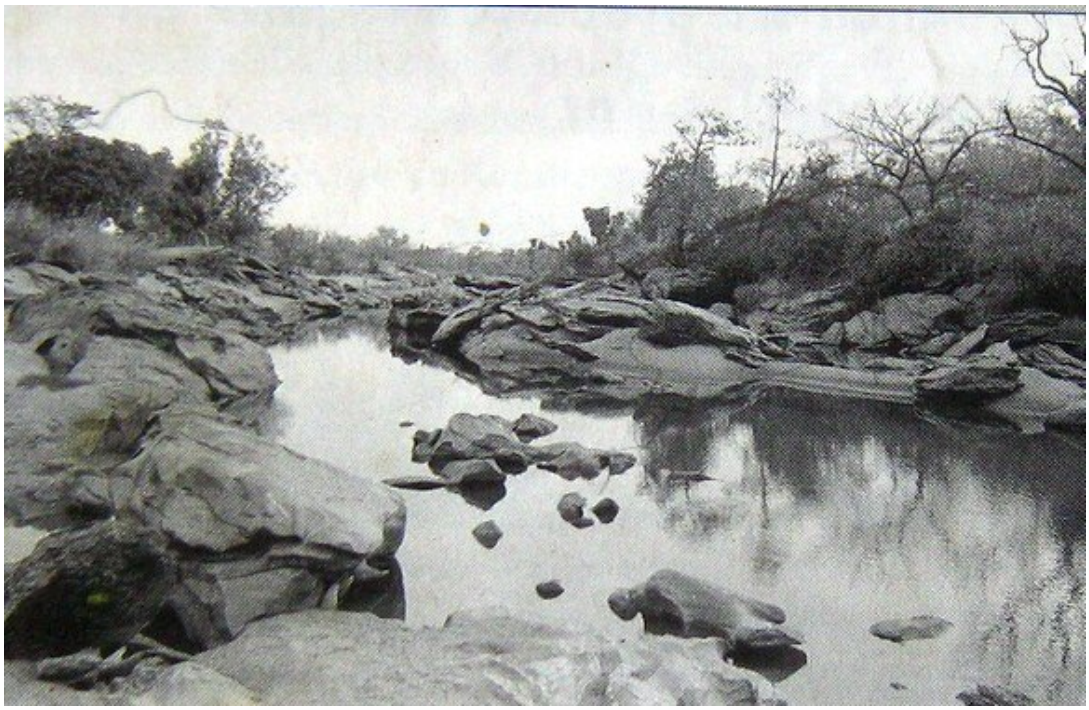


Figure xx, 14.5x9cm, black and white photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005



Figure xxi,15x9cm, photograph by Shindai Gideon, 2005

3.3.2 Sketches

Several sketches and drawings were also done on the site based on their aesthetic and subjective appeal to the researcher. These sketches were made from the selected landscape sceneries of Shere Hills based on their compositional qualities and forms. They are presented below in Figures xxii-xxxii.



Figure xxii, "Rocks 1",10x14cm, pencil on paper, 2005



Figure xxiii, "Rocks 11", 12x9cm, pencil on paper,2005

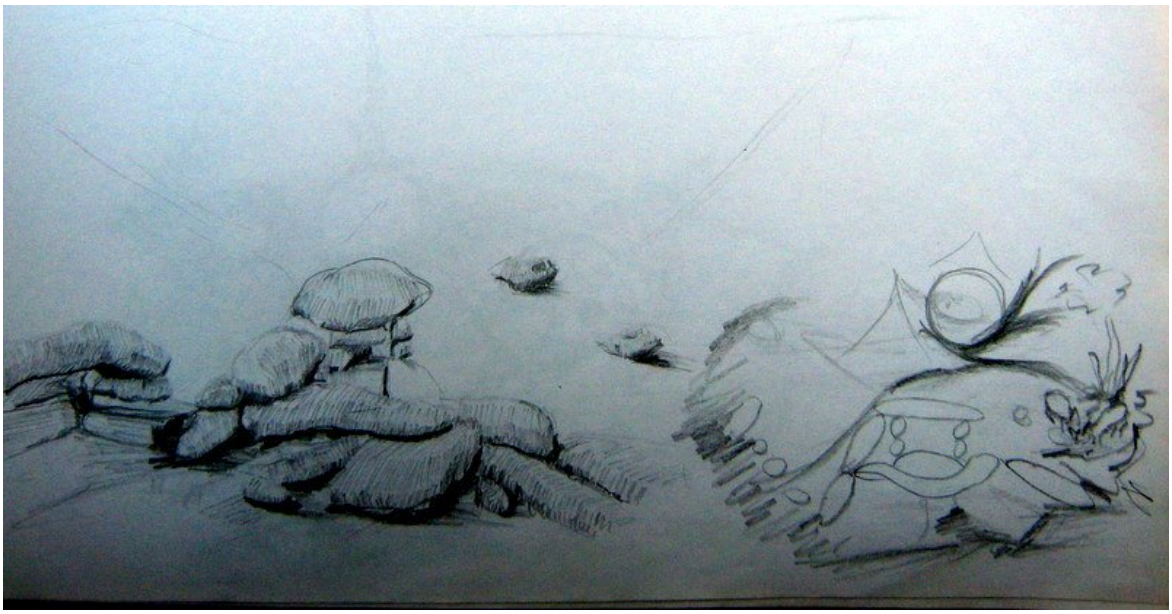


Figure xxiv, “Landscape”, 15.5x8.2cm, charcoal pencil on paper, 2005



Figure xxv, “Elephant grass”,12.7x6cm, charcoal on paper, 2005



Figure xxvi, “Wild wind”, 10x10cm,charcoal pencil on paper, 2005



Figure xxvii, “Village scape”, 9.9x11cm, pencil on paper, 2005



Figure xxviii, ‘‘Erosion’’, 8x12cm, pencil on paper, 2005

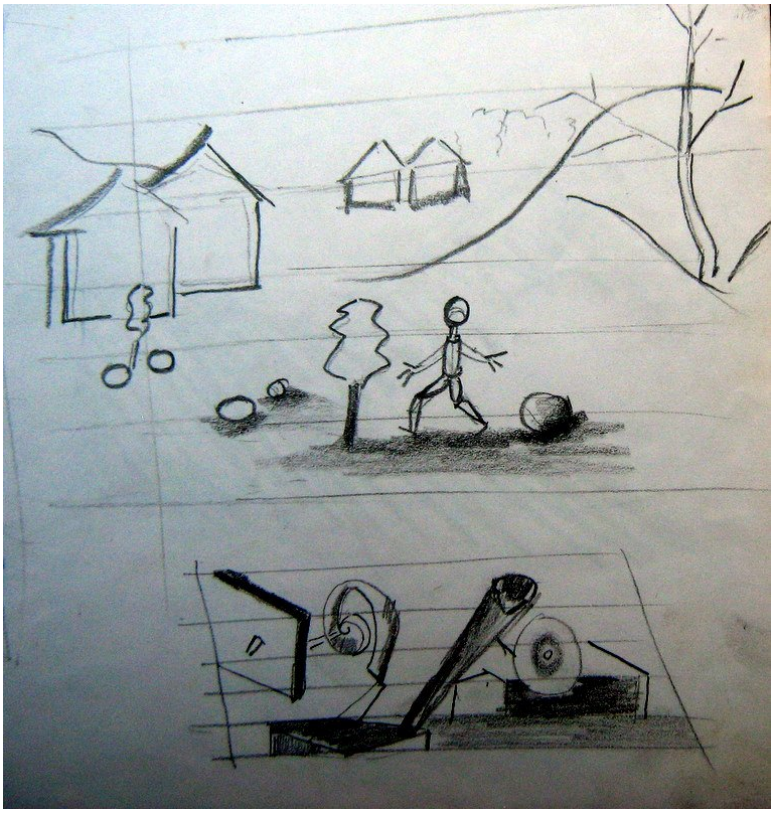


Figure xxix, ‘‘Study”, 11x11.5cm, pencil on paper. 2005

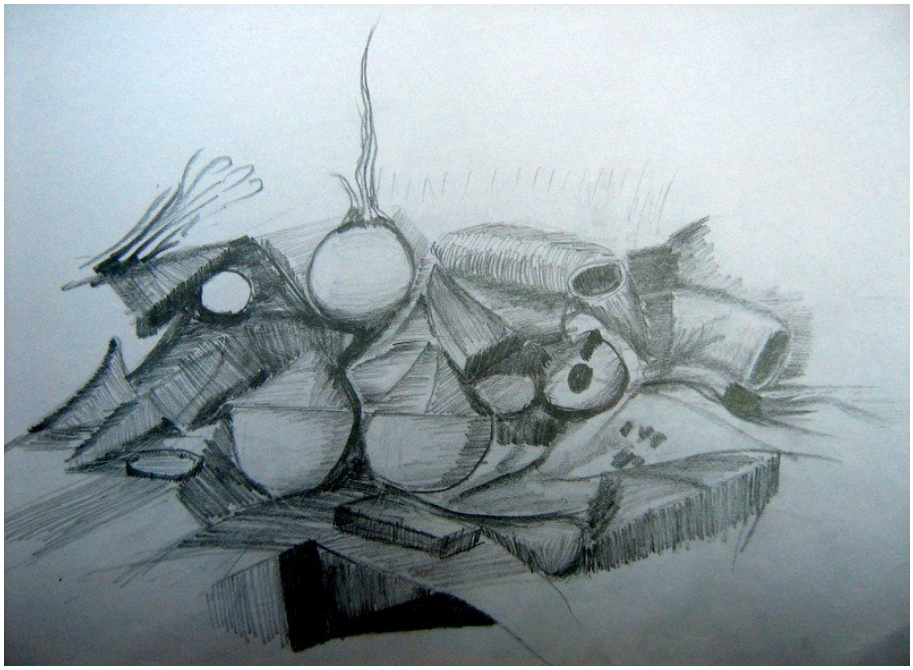


Figure xxx, “Geometrical shapes”, 10x13.5cm,pencil on paper, 2005

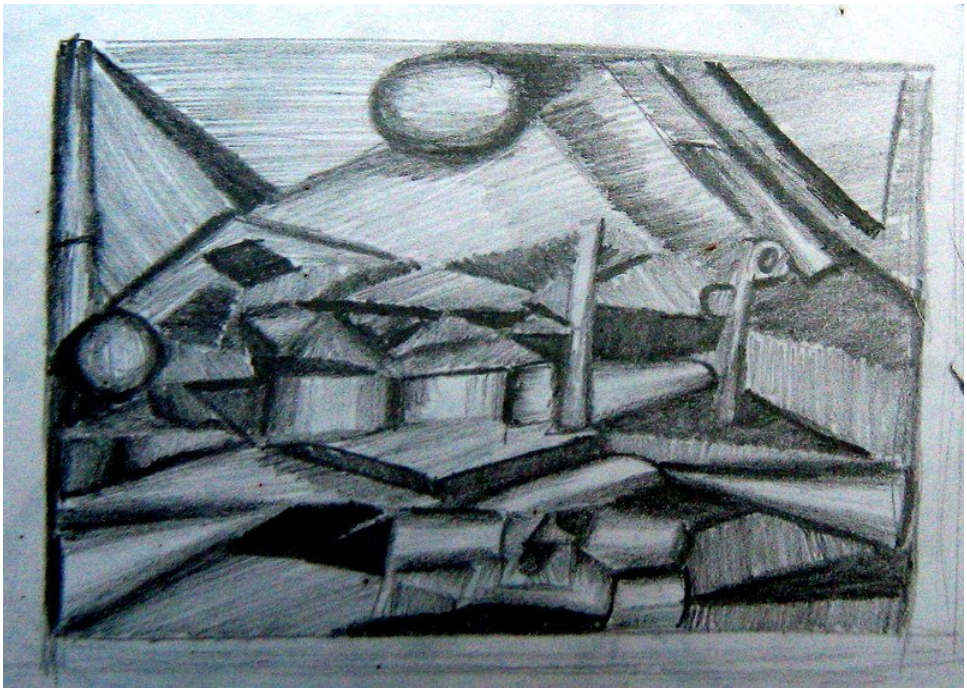


Figure xxxi, ‘‘Village scene’’, 9.5x13cm, pastel on paper, 2005

3.4 Supports and Materials

The sole support used in executing the paintings for this thesis was the canvas. Artists' oil colours, regular brushes, pallets, wooden stretchers and solvents were also employed.

3.5 Colour Usage

The use of colour was based on the varieties of colours as observed on the landscape; these range from yellows, greens, reds, grays, blues, in their varieties and hues.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this research were further given another simplified outlook by means of painting in the studio and are classified into three (3) stages. This is so for the systematic and easy interpretation of the various themes painted and as a means to aid the developmental process of the research.

The classification is as follows:

3.6.1 The Exploratory Stage: This involved realistic representation of the landscape motifs and forms. Exploration is the stage of painting which marks the starting of the study. Here, the researcher tries to start from the known to the unknown by capturing the element of forms and motifs on the landscape. All the elements, forms and motifs are given equal attention and rendered into a realistic landscape painting; "Of peace and progress." Plate 3 illustrates the work on this stage. The purpose of this stage is to

have a primary and visual appreciation of the forms as known to everyone. It also helps to begin a systematic approach to this study.

3.6.2 The Developmental Stage: This involves the minimalist simplification of these motifs and forms on the landscape. The landscape is further transformed by simplifying the elements of motifs and forms. Plates 8-16 illustrate this stage.

3.6.3 The Abstraction Stage: In this stage, the painting is totally transformed into the state of unrecognizable. At this stage, the motifs were reduced to their basic shapes and composed to suggest Cubic-like landscape. This is illustrated on Plates 17-22 where the researcher used the motif and forms on the landscape to come up with improvised abstract compositions.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF WORKS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the catalogue of works. They are discussed within the context of their production. For the purpose of this research analysis, 22 paintings were selected out of the 45 works done for detailed critique.

4.2 Catalogue of Works

"Hot Boulders" 2005 shown on Plate 1, is a rendition of general topography encompassing mountains, hills, village, shrubs and rocky formations in predominant reds. In the foreground, the blues and interplay of light greens and purple define the horizon with the sky in its usual blues. Some patches of gray purple and green are sandwiched between the background and solid foreground, a strip of mid-ground stretching the length of the landscape from left to right, bearing shallow valleys. Isolated rock formations rendered in warm yellow to indicate the time of the day, which is afternoon. In the foreground, there is no trace of grass, which indicates an eroded ground; the commanding boulders are rendered in reds, suggestive of the title of the work. These boulders give off shadows, which in turn mellow down the intensity of the warm afternoon. The feature is easily known from Shere Hills by virtue of the unique feature which has appeared in some magazines, was used as a reference painting to create a minimalist landscape



Plate 1, **"Hot Boulders"** (2005), 122x94cm**,** Oil on Canvas

"Serenity" Plate 2, is a landscape dominated by rocks, shrubs, trees, water and a mountain in its natural form. The sky is dominated by yellow ochre, with some infusion of purple and hues of blues and pinkish hue. At the background is a fence of trees stretching from left to right of the canvas. The rocks cut across from the foreground of the left side of the painting, to the middle ground and to the right hand forming a semi arc, from where runs a river which flows from the background to the foreground. The flowing effect from the water, at the background is contrasted by the serene stagnant water with a reflection stretching to the right, a slow movement which seems to begin at the foreground. Yellow ochre dominates this landscape with some dabs of purple, orange, blues and umber, pink, purple with grays that reflects on the water, the infusion of colours from the sky at the background suggests to as if it would began to rain. The researcher will develop this serene feature into minimalism.



Plate 2, **"Serenity"** (2005), 108 cm x 80 cm, Oil on Canvas

The tree with flowers in the "serenity" landscape ushers us into the next painting which is "Of peace and progress", Plate 3. This is a painting realized with a palette knife using stroke of yellow Hues, orange, red, and burnt umber to bring out the lines, shape and texture of the ground surface. The sky is infused with blues, yellow, purple and pink colours which were used to suggest distance. The ground is vegetated with green and yellow shrubs especially in the background. A tree with red flowers lies in between the left green tree. To the right part of the canvas in- between the two trees is the formation of rocks in a natural assemblage. The bare foreground is tilted in a continuous slope which is punctuated by an eroded parchment. The atmosphere is calm intended to suggest that one could go round the shrubs and climb the rocks peacefully. The restfulness and calmness of the scenery is suggestive of "Of Peace and Progress". The artist expression of forms here entails that this particular scenery will benefit from being minimalised.



Plate 3, **"Of Peace and Progress",** (2005), 99 x70c m, Oil on Canvas

The Plateau receives high amount of rainfall in the savanna region; "Passage to home", Plate 4. The work is a landscape, which has a formation of overwhelming proportion. It has provided habitat to the inhabitants who have chosen its valley for shelter against harsh winds and other external hazards. The sky is made up of hues of blue and grays. The background is fenced by trees laid behind the village huts. The back and the middle ground are warmed up by different shades of yellow, blue, purple, pink and green. The feature at the foreground which dominates the painting is affected by the erosion.

Slightly below it is a woman passing in-between the rocks, which are distributed and stretched leftwards. The ground is rendered in warm hues signifying danger to the settlement. The beauty of the scenery, a common feature settlement within Shere Hills will not also be left out from being transformed into minimalism.



Plate 4, **"Passage to Home",** (2005), 100x70cm, Oil on Canvas.

"Not far from home" (2005) Plate 5, is a landscape made up of dumps - artificial creation from activities of tin mining. The heavily eroded foreground and the rock formations are characteristics that are prevalent on the Plateau. Again, the huts are set in a manner as to draw maximum protection from the cover of the rocks. This is typical of a mining settlement - the huts are few, they are organized in close proximity to the actual mining area. The sky appears cool as to suggest a recent seasonal activity like rain, which also has rendered the general topography clean, cool and fresh. The sheep on the foreground don't need to stray too far for fresh feed.



Plate 5, **"Not far from Home"** (2005), 98x70cm, Oil on Canvas

"Waiting in vain", Plate 6, is another composition showing warm and active hues in an emotional state of being of a reclining figure. The woman appears with a worrisome face. The fact that she is reclined on a hard rock surface with her hands around her head suggests a long, frustrating wait. It is worthy of not that the place has become a tourist attraction and site. It is common sight to see women/men who come to relax, some find solace in the beautiful scenery even as they recline on rocks and meditate or unwind.



Plate 6, **"Waiting in Vain",** (2005), 108 x 95cm, Oil on Canvas

Another work in this realistic category is a mixed media painting shown in Plate 7, untitled. This begins to shift from realistic to the next stage. This works is characterized by the use of fabrics in the manner of collage which create an illusion of rock formations. The work retains the illusion of perspective and portrays realistic trees. It has embellishments of lines, which enhances the painting.



Plate 7, **"Untitled I",** (2005), 89.5x74.5cm, Mixed Media on Canvas

The second category of works begins from Plates 8 to 15, which marks the process of transforming the landscapes into minimalism was under taken by contemplating on the activities of erosion and mining which alter the landscape by reducing their land forms. This representation is also to reveal a simplification through the phases of Realism to conceptual minimalist representation of the landscape of Shere Hills and their immediate environment. Elements on the landscape were manipulated through the fusion of forms to create fluidity.

Plate 8, "Untitled" is a painting which brush and artist oil colours were used in creating a free flow of lines which appears up and down as a result of the land formation as observed by the researcher. The sky is seen infused with the landforms, which have made the perspective lost out. At the middle of the painting, some trees from left to the right side of the canvas are still visualized, though infused both from the top into the atmosphere and on the ground surface into

lines. Specifically, the elements here have been simplified with the presence of fleeting brush and line effect, as against a realist approach that dwells on details.



Plate 8, **"Untitled II"** (2005), 100x96cm, Oil on Canvas

Plate 9 is another painting in this category titled "Untitled II". This painting is also a transformed landscape dominated by suggestive brushstrokes. Using brushstrokes to suggest erosion, the landscape was reduced to fusion of forms on the landscape like plants and building flowers and rocky formations. The *sky* also achieved in the same approach with a dominant cool blue of varying tints and shades. Untitled III and Untitled IV, on Plate 10 and 11, are painting in the same category. In these works, the landscape continues to dissolve into more simplification by breezy lines and dominant warm monochromatic colours. However, certain motifs like rocks and plants can be barely visualised. The avoidance of detail forms here is the hallmark of minimalism.



Plate 9, **"Untitled III",** (2005), 109x90cm, Oil on Canvas



Plate 10, **"Untitled IV",** (2005), 104x63cm, Oil on Canvas



Plate 11, **"Untitled V",** (2005) 107x76cm, Oil on Canvas

"Untitled V", Plate 12, this painting depicts greenish foliage on both sides of the canvas. The middle of the painting is a composition of rocks in purple colours. The same characteristics of flowing brushstrokes and atmosphere are captured. The rocks are positioned centrally so as to suggest prominence even as the foreground is weaved by flowing lines of brush strokes in warm and cool sequence suggestive of earth colours. The persistent avoidance of details continues to be the focus of the painting, so as to achieve minimalism.

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Plate 12, **"Untitled VI",** (2005), 100x75cm**,** Oil on Canvas

Plate 13, "Untitled VII", is with bright colours of purple, pink, red and green in varying shades and tints. In this painting of a landscape with a stream and undulating topography, the researcher manipulates brushstrokes of suggestive and free flowing lines to realize this colourful and active piece. Dark bluish colours help to create depth that provokes curiosity.



Plate 13, **"Untitled VII",** (2005), 100x90cm, Oil on Canvas

In untitled VIII, plate xv, page 52, continues the minimalisation of the Shere landscape. In this painting, the researcher visualizes the landscape after a rainfall. The atmosphere is clear, justifying the dominant usage of gray, yellow, pink and blue. The linear strokes are inspired by the earthworms that creep around on the wet earth surface. The painting achieves a symmetric balance as a principle of art. This is seen in the general and proportional distribution of the elements of colour, lines and Shere landforms.



Plate 14, **"Untitled VIII",** (2005), 100x80cm, Oil on Canvas

"Untitled X1V", Plate 15,is the last painting in this transformative group; it creates a bridge to the ultimate minimalisation of this research. This oil on canvas is typical of minimalist painter's representation of landscape like Kathryn Jankus is a Day from Kansas University. The painting is dominated by a dark foreground that divides the canvas into two, symbolic of an exploited land that has remained almost useless, obscured and abandoned. However, a ray of hope comes as is seen in the dull sky with brushstrokes of yellow and tinted Prussian blue.



Plate 15, **"Untitled mini IX",** (2005), 100x80cm, Oil on Canvas

The final stage of this research brings in elements that are reminiscent of the cubist artists. This is evident in the use of geometric shapes and forms in this group of paintings. "Mini I", Plate 16, is a minimalist landscape showing a composition of huts, rocks, on the foreground, hills and minimalised trees. Geometric shapes were introduced.



Plate 16, **"Mini I",** (2005), 100x80cm, Oil on Canvas

The second work in this group is "Mini II", Plate 17 . This painting is a view of Shere landscape transformed completely into geometric forms, triangular formations, circles, cuboids, etc. Cylindrical shapes and pyramidal shapes are comprised to form a tree on the left hand corner of the canvas. The colour usage here is predominantly grays of orange, green, blues, etc.



Plate 17, **"Mini II",** (2005), 100x70cm'', Oil on Canvas

Mini III", Plate 18, is another representation in the same category like the previously analysed painting in Plate 17. The landscape is composed of various cubic, cylindrical shapes and planes, which intertwine to reduce the realistic landscape to geometric shapes. Forms visible here include two huts in the middle and trees. Colours of pink, blue, yellow are all used to realize this work. Various sizes help to create variety. The dark shapes create depth, which are derived from the mined pits that have devastated the landscape.



Plate 18, **"Mini III",** (2005), 100x70cm, Oil on Canvas

Plate 19 records a painting which develops from the work in Plate 18. "Mini IV" is further simplified with overlapping shapes like trapeziums that form the mountains. Colour usage here include, grays of yellow ochre, green, blue and maroon.



Plate 19, **“Mini IV”,** (2005), 100x76cm, Oil on Canvas

"Mini V", is a similar painting to “mini IV.” It is also rendered in geometric shapes in generally warm tones with dark patches to create depth.



Plate 20, **"Mini V",** (2005), 100x81cm, Oil on Canvas

Finally, the peak of the minimalisation is represented in the two paintings on Plate 21 below and Plate 22. The paintings "Mini VI" and "Mini VII" are produced with unconventional material, which is sawdust and oil on canvas. At this point, the geometric forms are minimalised to a point the evokes the viewers imagination of a landscape. The simple curves, colours and lines create an aesthetic interest derived from an exploration, and development of forms inherent in the Shere landscapes.



Plate 21, **"Mini VI",** (2005), 89x64cm, Saw dust and Oil on Canvas



Plate 22, **"Mini VII",** (2005), 89 x 64cm, Saw dust and Oil on Canvas

In conclusion, this analysis has looked at a total of 22 paintings rendered in oil on canvas and unconventional media like pieces of "Ankara" (wrappers) and sawdust. From the foregoing, the final paintings have produced forms which are simplified to a minimal point which are reminiscent of the very mechanical objects or tools used in mining on the Shere landscape that have also led to the devastation of the topography.

CHAPTER FIVE

`SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

Minimalism as an art style has not been applied on the Shere landscapes before this research. The attempt by the researcher to transform it from a realistic to simplified form was guided by the following objectives:

i. Develop a painting possibility by transforming forms from a study of the Shere hills landscape from realism to a simplified state.

ii. Explore the aesthetics of an abused landscape.

iii. To produce paintings that would also serve as a medium of creating awareness to society on the need to respect nature and cultivate it rather than destroy it.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, a review of 13 paintings on minimalism was made and from data selected and analyzed, 40 paintings were produced out of which 22 were catalogued.

5.2 Findings

From the results of painting the Shere landscapes taken from realism to minimalism, the researcher made the following discoveries: there were unlimited forms to explore. In addition, a variety of colours could be explored which created interest. These colours ranged from yellow ochres, pink, blues, reds, browns, grays, and greens in their varying tints, shades and tones.

5.3 Conclusion

Transforming the Shere landscape into a minimalist style created an artistic avenue to explore such land forms like rocks, vegetation, undulating land surface and more as could be seen on the landscape. Minimalisation, philosophically points to how man has unleashed devastation on the Shere environment and reduced it to an ungraceful state, even though the researcher has found in all this, an avenue for artistic attraction. Lastly, it is hoped that, with the recording of this research work, man will realize the importance of conserving his environment for future generation.

5.4 Recommendation

The researcher proffers the following recommendations,

1. that since a study of specific landscapes can lead to a deeper appreciation of the fragility of the ecosystem and direct us to sensitive use of our environment, such studies are therefore advocated;

2. that painters can gain inspiration through this research to adapt painting styles apart from realistic renditions;

3. that other researchers can investigate other aspects of landscape painting such as river terrains, caves, and desert;

4. that exhibitions of minimalist landscape paintings be regularly mounted to raise awareness on the ravaging of environment to the society.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

1. The results of this research will serve as documentation for posterity;

2. The research has been able to give a deeper appreciation and understanding of the aesthetic qualities associated with it;

3. The research serves as a catalyst and source of inspiration to Nigerian artists to engage in paintings of their rich indigenous environments.

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