

**A STUDY OF OLADESU JOHNSON'S PAINTING
STYLES (1997-2007)**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, James Ameh Sule, hereby declare that this thesis titled: “A STUDY OF OLADESU JOHNSON’S PAINTING STYLES (1997-2007)” has been researched by me in the Department of Fine Arts under the supervision of Prof. A. R. Saliu and Dr. G. Gambo. The topic has not been presented in any previous application for the award of a degree or diploma at any University. All quotations and information utilized and their sources are acknowledged by means of references/ bibliography.

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Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis titled: A STUDY OF OLADESU JOHNSON’S PAINTING STYLES (1997- 2007) meets the regulations governing the award of, the degree of, Masters of Arts, in Art History of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literally presentation.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God and my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude goes to God almighty for enabling me to complete this programme. My major supervisor, Prof. A.R. Saliu is specially thanked for all the attention he gave to me, his tireless effort in correcting my thesis and his patience in ensuring that I completed this programme. I am particularly grateful to my second supervisor, Dr. G. Gambo for his creative input and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This research is an overview of Oladesu Johnson's painting styles from 1997-2007. The general aim is the critical analysis of the styles used by the artist in executing his paintings, and specifically, the sources of his inspiration. Attempt is made to identify the uniqueness or peculiarity of his style as well as a close examination of the relevance of his paintings to the society. The literature reviewed, centered on the meaning of style, types of styles, styles used by a host of Nigerian artists and comments on Oladesu. The researcher used the historical, analytical and descriptive approaches to achieve the stated objectives. The use of interview and photographs helped the researcher to collect data for this work, through a fieldwork. The study revealed that, Oladesu Johnson, produced paintings with major styles like realism, expressionism, impressionism and abstraction. He however, refers to a group of paintings he executed with the adaption of the butterfly motif from 1999-2004 as dualism, suggesting two sides of issues in the choice of subject matter. However, he has a personal style which is associated with his application of colours, that the researcher calls, Dot-linearism. This is observed in the use of thin lines and specks or dots which he embellishes across the surface of a finished painting. Findings from the paintings analyzed, show that, Oladesu executed the works with cool and warm colours. In most of the works he adapted motifs and colours from butterfly wings. Sources of Oladesu's inspirations are the environment, culture, education, personal philosophy and his associates. These are in addition to a notable source that he garnered from, which is the butterfly motif. The peculiar features that mark his paintings are the specs, nobs, antenna and colours adapted from the butterfly. The relevance of his paintings is seen to be thought provoking, bringing hope, joy, love and relaxation to people among others.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction:

Modern Nigerian art¹ has come a long way with several artists who have made significant contributions and, who are always being made reference to. Some of them have produced works in paintings, drawings, graphics, sculpture, ceramics and textiles among others. These artists are unique in their approaches, techniques or styles, which differ from one another. Among them are pioneers like, Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan, Julius Akeredolu, Ben Enwonwu, Yusuf Grillo, Irein Wangboje, Uche Okeke, Erhabor Emokpae and Bruce Onabrakpeya; others are later artists such as Dele Jegede, Gani Odutokun, Kolade Oshinowo, Jerry Buhari, Jacob Jari, Abraham Uyovbisere, Kaltume Bulama Gana and Ayo Aina, to mention just a few.

Barnes (2006) states that, “The works produced by an individual artist usually have in common distinctive and identifiable visual qualities. These qualities form what is called the artist’s personal style”². Style is a personal technique that an artist employs in producing his/her works. Style is said to be distinctive because, it presents certain features that are peculiar to the artist. In addition, style in art works can exist in at least, four distinct levels: personal, group, regional and period³.

From the year 1920 to date, modern Nigerian art works are grouped into three general styles, namely, the naturalistic, the abstract and the expressive⁴,

although, cases of stylistic overlap cannot be ruled out, as style is dynamic.

Cernuschi (2006) comments that:

Modern art comprises a remarkable diversity of styles, movements and techniques. The wide range of styles encompasses the sharply realistic painting and the abstract rhythms of poured paint in black and white. Abstraction too, reveals a number of different approaches. Other artists preferred an aesthetic of disorder, in using old newspapers, stamps and other discarded objects to create picture⁵.

This view gives an insight into what modern artists do in the course of executing their art works, particularly painting, in terms of styles and techniques. The author further states that, 20th century art displays more than stylistic diversity. It is in the modern period that artists have made paintings not only of traditional materials such as oil on canvas, but of any material available to them⁶. This observation emphasizes the fact that, though styles differ from one another and they are diverse yet, painters explore the use of other materials other than the conventional oil on canvas to execute their paintings. This is hinged on the fact that painting has taken several major forms in modern Nigerian art, involving distinctive media and techniques. It also stresses the point that, such styles being used go along with different materials available to the artists.

In modern art, styles change through time, and artists introduce new materials, techniques and subject matter⁷. Life is dynamic, so changes may occur in the way an artist approaches his/her works. An artist may use several styles in producing his/her works, with different materials over a period of time.

It is important therefore, to note that, the style in any art work has very much to do with the historical context, subject matter and symbolism, taken into consideration by the artist. Hence, the works of an artist are subject to several factors within and outside his/her immediate environment. As observed by Cernuschi (2005), “Art should not divorce itself from everyday experience, pursue abstract philosophical ideals, or probe the individual psychology of its creator”. In other words, the daily experience of an artist, feelings as well as his/her reasoning cannot be divorced from the kind of work he/she produces. In the light of what modern artists do, the subject matter they paint, the styles used in executing their works, the materials employed and the inspiration with which they are influenced to create art works, are among factors that the researcher has considered necessary to study in Oladesu Johnson’s styles in modern Nigerian art.

Background of the study

Oladesu Johnson was born on the 14th of February, 1964, at New Edubiase, Ghana. He attended Local Authority (L.A.) primary school, New Edubiase, Ghana, from 1970-1975. Thereafter, he proceeded to middle B. school, New Edubiase in Ghana, from 1976-1980 where he completed his study.

Johnson Oladesu started his art career in Ghana as an apprentice to Mr. Otu John and Mr. Francis John for some years. When he returned to Nigeria, he attended Saint Charles Grammar school, Osogbo, 1980-1986 where he was a

science student but, fortunate to have been taught art by a hardworking teacher named Mr. Ayo Micah. During this period, Oladesu was faced with the choice of studying science or visual art because of his interest in visual art. According to Oladesu (2004), *“I dumped science courses for visual art”*. This action received opposition from his science teacher as well as his parents, yet his longing to study fine art made him to go on with the decision.



Figure 1: Oladesu Johnson

He got admission to study art at the polytechnic Ibadan, from 1987-1989 and graduated with National diploma. Later, he proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1991, where he studied Fine Arts and graduated with Bachelor of Art (B.A.) degree in 1997. Immediately after graduation, he started his Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree and graduated in the year 2000.

In his master's research, Oladesu worked on adapting butterfly motifs in painting. He concentrated on butterfly and created artworks using patterns from butterfly, because, according to him, it reveals some philosophical statements.

Oladesu Johnson has worked in several places before and after graduating from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He worked with Ibadan Polytechnic maintenance section in 1988 for four months. While studying in Zaria, he seized the opportunity to work at Kolsat Art Gallery Abeokuta in 1995. Multiple Vision Gate Way Hotel Ota, was another place he worked between 1997 and 1998. He entered the teaching profession in 2000 with God's Time Comprehensive Secondary School, Zaria, where he taught visual Art, before moving to Zaria Academy, Zaria in 2001. He taught Visual art, and yet, engaged in studio practice in his residence located at No.1a, Alao Okoosi Street Sango Ota, Ogun State.

Oladesu joined the staff of the department of Fine and Applied Arts, College of Engineering and Technology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ibojun campus, Ogun state in 2003 as a lecturer.

Oladesu has participated in several groups and solo exhibitions from 1987 - 2007. The group exhibitions are; AFAS exhibition, Ibadan Polytechnic, 1987; AIDFAS exhibition, Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria 1992; Nogh- Nogh Art Group, Myriads of experience, Kashim Ibrahim library Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 1994; NAFEST exhibition, Abeokuta, Ogun State, 1995; Nogh-Nogh, Another Step exhibition, Gallery 3, Zaria, 1997;

Hommage (An art exhibition in honour of Professor Jimo Akolo), Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1998; Memorial exhibition of (Gani Odutokun, Professor L. T. Bentu and Professor S. I. Wangboje), Kashim Ibrahim library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; The Orisa- A bridge Between Brazil and Abeokuta, Brazilian Embassy in Lagos, 1998; Ibogun Opening glee, (An Art exhibition by Ibogun group of artists), Gateway Hotel, Ota, Ogun State, 2004; End Extreme Poverty Now, (An Exhibition of Drawings, Photographs, Paintings and Sculpture), Lagos State House of Assembly, Alausa, Lagos, 2007. The solo exhibitions include Adapting butterfly motifs in painting M.F.A. Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Solo exhibition “Butterflies”, Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2000; CHOGM exhibition- Commonwealth’s People Market (CPM), Behind Shehu Musa Yar’adua Centre, Abuja, 2003; Dualism Solo exhibition-National Museum Onikan, Lagos, 2004; and First NUC Research and Development Fair, 2004.

Oladesu has several commissions to his credit, among which are; mosaic relief sculptures and painting for medicare clinics, Ota Central Specialist Hospital, Ibukun clinics, Rubee Hospital and Hetta Medical Centre, all at Zango Ota, Ogun state between 1989 and 2004.

Statement of the Problem

Oladesu has been painting with specific styles and exhibiting art works as a professional artist for over fifteen years. Despite this, there is no scholarly study on Oladesu’s artistic styles and activities. Hence, the problem of this

study is the lack of comprehensive documentation of his style within the context of modern Nigerian art in general and painting in particular.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically analyze the styles used by Oladesu Johnson, while the specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examine the source(s) of Oladesu's inspiration towards the development of his style of painting.
- ii. Examine Oladesu's technique(s) and styles of paintings
- iii. Identify how unique or peculiar, Oladesu's style is, in modern Nigerian art.
- iv. Examine the relevance of his works to the society.

Justification of the Study

Johnson Oladesu's name and works may not have been known to a lot of people, as the researcher is not aware of any previous study made on the artist. Hence, this study is to bring the works of Johnson Oladesu to the consciousness of Nigerians and non-Nigerians. The study is also justified on the premise that most previous studies and write-ups have been on the first generation of modern artists in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study is hoped to educate and inform people on the techniques and styles of Johnson Oladesu to modern painting. It is intended that the result of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on modern art in Nigeria.

This study is also expected to serve as reference materials for artists, art historians and researchers. This research documentation is intended to challenge other artists to be creative in executing their art works with, regards to styles and techniques peculiar to them which can be unique and original.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is focused on the techniques and styles adopted by Johnson Oladesu in his paintings. Hence, analysis and study of his works from 1997 – 2007 will be made for the following reasons; his professional and academic training were majorly achieved within this period, he obtained his Bachelor of arts degree in Fine art in 1997 with specialty in painting, and had further studied painting at the post graduate level, where he obtained a Master of Fine Arts degree also in painting. The researcher restricted the analysis of Oladesu's works to oil paintings.

Research Questions

To adequately resolve the research problem, the following research questions will, among others, be answered: When did Johnson Oladesu produce his first painting? What is/are the specific style/styles used by Oladesu in his paintings? Why does Oladesu approach his art works the way he does? Does Oladesu's style determine the choice of subject matter or vice versa in his paintings? What are the sources of Oladesu's inspirations? Does Oladesu use the same style for all his paintings or are there exceptions?

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Modern Nigerian artists have recorded significant progress in the field of art. This can be seen in the unique and distinctive qualities that characterize modern paintings. Studies centered on their artistic development resulted in a handful of literature on their styles, techniques, colour scheme, themes and influences. The few literature on the activities of modern Nigerian artists are reviewed, to give a framework to this research on Oladesu's styles to modern paintings. Available literature on Oladesu Johnson are also reviewed to examine his activities in the visual arts.

Styles of Painting

Lazzari & Schlesier (2009) define style as "specific recognizable attributes and characteristics that are consistent and coherent in the art work within a historical period, within a cultural tradition, or of an individual artist". Generally speaking, style is basically the manner in which the artist portrays his or her subject matter and how the artist expresses his or her vision. Styles are determined by the characteristics that describe the painting, such as the form, colour and composition employed by the artist. The way an artist handles the medium, the method or technique used and the philosophy or driving force behind the painting are factors used to determine styles.

Artists have used several styles in their paintings. Here are some of the common styles;

Abstraction: Lazzari & Schlesier (2009) affirms that, abstraction is “visual imagery in art that does not copy reality. This might be achieved by simplifying, distorting, or exaggerating objects from nature, or it may be expressed in completely non-objective forms”. It is a style that employs colours, lines, space, forms and texture in a composition to simplify what is seen in reality by distortion or exaggeration. Yenawine (1991) states that, abstraction “contains no recognizable imagery and uses pictorial and sculptural languages only in order to create its own reality which is referred to as nonfigurative, nonobjective, or nonrepresentational”.

Expressions of artists using abstraction often result in distorted figures, exaggerated composition which does not represent the actual picture, and a nonobjective representation of objects.

Realism: Yenawine (1991) affirms that, “Realism strives to depict, with varying degrees of accuracy, real and existing things. Realism is a type of art that shows things exactly as they appear in life. Most artists represent everyday life with recognizable forms as they appear in real life.

Expressionism: Chagall (2010) affirms that, “it is an art movement that tries to express certain feelings about something”. An artist that employs this style is concerned with the feeling he or she seeks to express in a painting rather than the exact representation of what they are painting. Expressionism, according to

Yenawine (1991), 'is the tradition of emphasizing the emotional content of art'. The author adds that, 'usually, this content emerges from emphatic, dramatic colour and line, as well as from the visible presence of the artist's gesture in making the work, and often from the choice of subject, which can range from religious fervor to anxiety about city life, war or death'.

Impressionism: Lazzari and Schlesier (2009) assert that, impressionism is a "painting style that attempts to capture subtle light qualities with small strokes of strong colour". This style is viewed as rendering paintings with reflection of light in bold colours and less detail. Yenawine (1991) agrees with this definition when he observes that, "impressionism is characterized by beautiful, strong colours, broad visible brushstrokes, outdoor subjects, including people at leisure, and a light, airy appearance".

Review of Modern Nigerian Artists' Styles of Painting

The review of modern Nigerian artists as it relates to this work focuses on their approaches, styles and techniques, influence on theme they painted and the choice of the motif they used in producing their works. After training, these artists worked independently, hence they have the freedom to approach their paintings with styles of their choice, and make discoveries through further research and experiments.

Considering the development of styles employed to execute paintings in modern Nigerian art, a review of some artists from 1920 to date will project the

streams of styles as used by the older and younger artists. When Aina Onabolu (1882 – 1963) started producing paintings, his works were majorly portraits and landscapes. Fosu (1986) asserts that, “Onabolu’s portraits were characterized by standardized European academic formalism – balanced proportions and distinctively accurate in anatomical realism”. He studied the human anatomy extensively, and made a conscious attempt to represent them exactly the way they appeared. This defined his style of painting which turned out to be naturalistic with photographic realism.

Though Akinola Lasekan (1916 – 1972) produced works that were known for their formal academic handling with a touch of idealization, his works were colourful and more expressive, which are mostly cartoons, portraits and landscapes. Colours were distinctive features of Lasekan’s works, because, he employed several colours, while his style of painting was expressionism.

On the other hand, Ben Enwonwu (1921 – 1994), was a painter and a sculptor. He expressed himself with the academic convention of realism in some of his works at a point, and made several other works with styles that varied. According to Fosu (1986), Ben Enwonwu could switch from one style to the other without being caught in a corner with some overworked, stylistic cliché. Enwonwu executed his works with several styles, and could use any style or more styles in his works. The expression that characterized his works was the use of a particular style in executing a painting, and a combination of styles in creating visual elements in some works. A clear insight to this combination of

styles was made by Beier (1986) when he states that “Ben may paint or carve in calm academic realism, as found in his Nigerian personages, as well change his style to severe elongations”. Ben Enwonwu executed his paintings using several styles.

A progression in the use of styles was observed in the works of Yusuf Grillo who is a painter. Mounts (1973) states that, “Grillo’s paintings are rendered with usual forms of Yoruba dress as well as the dignified and impressive stateliness. He paints simplified figures, without descriptive detail”. From this statement, Grillo’s style is expressionism and abstraction. He paints with creative impressions featuring subject matters that are common to cities showing the influence of many countries and cultures. “Market women”, “Mother and Child”, “Yoruba ladies” and “Hausa men” are examples of his subject matters, which are captured in dignified simplicity. The figures in these paintings are elongated and unified with backgrounds that are heightened by elements of colour designs.



Figure 2: Mother and Child, Oil on canvas, 149cm x84cm, 1979. Collection of the National Gallery of Art.

The adaptation of motif to paintings is a notable practice in the arts of Uche Okeke. According to Beier (1986), “Uche Okeke took to an art form, called Uli. Uli is a drawing technique that consists mainly of abstract forms derived from nature: animal, plant and cosmic forms”. Uche Okeke is seen as an artist who creates works that are abstract in style, although he paints varying subjects as observed by Mount (1973), who reports that, “Okeke is concerned with varied categories of subject matter in his paintings. He also paints scenes from everyday life, landscapes and abstract murals”. Okeke draws inspiration from the environment, and executes works using abstract style. He drew from both Igbo and northern cultures. The northern, culture is generally more

realistically than the Igbo culture. Uche Okeke produced some other works that are naturalistic in style, an additional style to the abstract, which characterized most of his works.

On the other hand, Mounts (1973) affirms that, “Jimo Akolo paints constructed pictures intricately. His interest is in design and colour, his figures express no emotion, instead they are dignified in a tightly balanced and often exciting aesthetic composition”. Akolo is observed, as an artist whose major interest is in the use of colours, although he paints human figures among his subjects with impressionism.

Simon Okeke’s paintings are the most unusual. Simon is a watercolourist with a wholly individual style. Mount (1973) observes that, “...he frequently distorts figures and objects to enhance the compactness of his designs. His figures are composed of simple, rounded shapes that are free of most descriptive detail”. Distortion in Simon Okeke’s works makes them tend towards impressionism; nevertheless the figures are identifiable except for the lack of descriptive detail. The tone and effects were created to give emphasis to colour application rather than the forms. Mounts (1973) opines that, “Bruce Onabrakpeya produces paintings and sculptures. He concentrates more on interesting prints within the techniques of lino-cut, etching and woodcut. His themes are literary, the forms are frequently descriptive”. Onabrakpeya’s works are identified to have features of descriptive details, which make his style to be realism.

The environment in general and culture in particular, has so much to do, in the works of artists. This is notable in the works of several contemporary Nigerian artists. Okeke (1995) states that, "...due to Bruce Onabrakpeya's different cultural backgrounds and his own independent creative sensibility, he arrived at a unique formal expression". His inspiration is from different cultural backgrounds with unique formal expression that is peculiar to his works. This is supported by Fosu (1986) when he states that, "Onabrakpeya's themes are a blend of authentic traditional folklore, myths and oral history from Benin/Urhobo cultures". He further gives a vivid description of works and his style, asserting that, "During the early phase of Onabrakpeya's career, around 1964, his graphics demonstrated bold lines, contrasted with bright colours and deep texture". It is observed that, the colours were brilliant and dominated over the contrasting outlines, such that the works are likened to graphic paintings.

Mount (1973) reports that, "A great deal of Nwoko's works is pervaded by an intense expressiveness. Not only are the forms and colours expressive, but the painting is obviously a commentary on current events." Nwoko's style is expressionism, while his themes centre on happenings in the society. Other authors are in agreement with this statement. In the view of Egonwa (1994) on Nwoko's early paintings, "they are highly expressive, and show a good grasp of form organization", while Fosu (op.cit.) reports that, "the source of Nwoko's inspiration is from current events, and he portrays satirical comments on socio-cultural issues". The author observes further that, "the faces of Nwoko's figures

extract imaginative chronicle. The distortions are poignant and creative as well as deliberately ugly”. Nwoko, according to Mounts (op.cit.), “is without doubt one of the most creative of the Zaria graduates. He is highly an original artist who combines a superb decorative sense with expressiveness and a feeling for social comment. His works are pervaded by an intense expressiveness”.

Omokaro (1997) observes an entirely different style that Abraham Uyovbisere experiments with. The author notes that, “Uyovbisere has successfully combined the austerity of Leonardo da Vinci and the volumes of Michelangelo with the new interpretations of human and animal anatomies to create a world of his own - the quasi – impressionism movement”. This implies that Abraham Uyobisere creates human and animal anatomies that appear like impressionism, but differ greatly in tones, details and effects.

Okeke (1995) reports that, “Gani Odutokun’s later paintings, portray mastery of the liquidized oil techniques; for he easily simulated Islamic calligraphic symbols and Hausa architecture and design with dripped lines of colours”. Motifs which featured in his paintings were drawn from the Islamic calligraphic writings as well as the traditional Hausa architectural patterns. The major determinant of the sources from which Gani got his inspirations were technical-studio exigencies and the changing environment. His commitment to studio practice inspired him to create exciting art works, with themes that revolve round the environment and the universe at large. Linear

drips of colour define the works of this artist whose works are peculiar in style, theme and inspiration.

A detailed description of Gani's style was made by Sani (2008), when he describes him as

an artist who followed the sequence of stretching, pouring and then thin down his colours into various hues, in small plastic containers, using thinning agents like turpentine or thinner. He thereafter, pours the already liquidized colours on his prepared canvas.

He further affirms that, "Gani's liquidized technique is observed to be more of control of colours poured on canvas, and also directed to flow within a specific area". This style of colour application does not allow for the use of brush, yet the result is colourful and exciting. Sani (2008) further describes this style as having expressionistic qualities. The visible style which Gani employed in his works is expressionism. In a related article, Egonwa(1994) observes that Gani's paintings "show the power of expression, and the expression of power for diverse purposes in the Nigerian and human community".

Commenting on Gani's choice and use of colours, Fosu (1986) notes that,

Gani has experimented with colour symbolism. For instance, earth colours represent the known. He employs this often in his landscapes which were usually inspired by Hausa traditional designs. Blue is basic to him, and he must always return to it, but he also uses it to express the unknown.

Blue is a personalized colour in the works of this artist. His appreciation for it among other colours, is identified in his constant usage of it in his paintings.

Okeke (1995) observes that, “Jerry Buhari shared with Gani Odutokun the urge to experiment with techniques from the traditional to the unconventional, and that Jerry’s use of colour is expressive. In his paintings, Jerry shows a tendency towards complete abstraction”. An over view of Jerry’s styles shows tendencies towards abstraction and expressionism.

Jacob Jari’s interest in finding an alternative painting medium led him to the use of cornstalk in his mosaic works. He sought to use an alternative medium as against the conventional application of oil on canvas. Notwithstanding, Jari used the conventional tradition of oil on canvas in producing realistic paintings (Okeke). Okeke (1995) further opines that, “Jari’s realistic paintings are simple, while his mosaic paintings are represented in a colourful way, without detailing. He also executes his paintings in abstract form”. Jari’s styles of painting are realism and abstraction.

Obiora Udechukwu is another artist who uses lines in executing most of his paintings. Fosu (1986) notes that, “characteristically, Udechukwu’s works are marked by line drawings. He has also developed enough flexibility for the use of his *uli* motifs to the point where he is able to achieve a lyrical effect with them”. He is an artist who is wildly enthusiastic and emotional in the adaptation of the *uli* motif from his cultural setting, in his paintings. Fosu (op.cit.) further opines that, “when his motifs are carried to the extreme, Udechukwu’s works can be mistaken for cartoons. Remarkably, his style is not limited to the use of lines to define forms and create effect in paintings”. Egonwa (1994), for

instance observes that, “his initial style was naturalistic, having grown out of the mainstream European academic style. His naturalistic style was characterized by formal academic representation of concepts in his works. This is observed by Anatsui (1993) who notes that, Obiora’s style at the initial stage was largely formal and representational. His works have an appearance of being true and real in the way he handled them. An observation of his later style was made by Egonwa (1994) who asserts that, “his forms are now completely purged of all non-essentials even as colours became pure and luminous. Nevertheless, the works are bold, oscillating between the abstract and the expressionistic tendencies”. Notable observation on Obiora’s styles in his works, projects the use of naturalism, abstraction and expressionism.

The activities of modern Nigerian artists continued with the observation of Jari (2008) on the description of Mu’azu Sani’s liquidized style. The author notes that, “Sani’s first sketches his composition unto a surface and applies a wash, indicating a colour scheme. He then lays the work on a floor and splashes or drips different lines of already liquidized paint, making sure that he achieves the harmony of colours, the solidity of forms as well as depth”. Commenting on his personal style of painting, Sani (2008) asserts that, “I have a mixture of various oil media-studio oil colour, acrylic, enamel paint and automobile paints in my liquidized splashing”. He adds that, “I use sticks to splash or sprinkle the colours, though sometimes guide the sprinkled colours too, but do not allow accidental smudging, depending on my desired effects”. It is obvious that the

technique and style of colour application employed by Sani, defer considerably from the conventional usage of brush and palette knife. However, he employs the use of sticks to splash or sprinkle his colours. Commenting on what he considers to be his style of painting, Sani (2008) states that, his works have expressionistic qualities. The technique of dripping or splashing which marks his paintings is characterized with expressionism.

Okeke (1995), observing the progression of Ayo Aina's styles in modern paintings, states that, "he is a painter, who paints with palette knife and brush. His paintings in early 1990s are almost entirely abstract. In the process of time, Aina began to paint illustrative pictures with human and linear decorative elements". Aina's style which is document is entirely abstraction.

Review of Literature on Oladesu's Paintings

This section focuses on related literature on Johnson Oladesu and his works. This study is expected to be a major source of information about Johnson Oladesu, as it relates to his styles of art.

Literature on Johnson Oladesu are few. Exhibition catalogues, Master of Fine Arts (MFA) thesis and newspapers are the available literature to the researcher. Observations and opinions that relate to Johnson Oladesu are being considered to establish a foundation for this study. Through Oladesu's training and researches, he has acquired skills and knowledge in painting, graphics and drawing. Hence, a study of this kind would focus on his works as evident in the available literature.

Oguntona (2004) states that, “Johnson is very good at portraiture as evidenced in some of his paintings and drawings. The titles of some of his portraits are “Hajia”, “Mallam Garuba”, “Don’t worry, Be happy” and “Levi 1-my friend”. Oladesu is skillful in the production of works with different mediums, like oil painting and pencil drawing. Portraits are among concepts he works on. Oguntona further observes that,

Oladesu displayed qualities of being professionally inclined, very prolific and committed to his field of specialization-painting. In Nigeria today, art graduates usually put distance between themselves and their studio. Happily enough, Oladesu is not one of the artists who keep distance with their studio practice.

Studio practice is a major aspect of Oladesu’s professional involvement, which is an indication that he has produced several works.

Oladesu made extensive study on butterfly during his Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programme in 2000. He did an in-depth palette research on colours of the butterfly and thereafter adapted motifs from butterfly for his paintings. In an article, Nnabuike (2004) remarks that, “Oladesu derives inspiration from butterfly, both for realistic paintings and abstracts”. The author further states that, “he equally turns out figure paintings, landscapes and drawings. His subjects are not limited in terms of selection of what to paint; rather he executes works in figures, landscapes, abstract concepts and beach scenes”. Oladesu’s commitment to the use of motifs and patterns from butterfly for his works is a style he refers to as dualism.

In a related view on the kind of works that Oladesu produces, Kehinde (2004) observes that, “he produces calligraphic works”, and quotes the content of one saying, “Prayers should be as natural as breathing’, as one of the artist’s calligraphy pieces states”. From this statement, it is certain that Oladesu produces calligraphic works, in which he writes out wise sayings and quotable quotes, being a graphic form of expression.

Speaking on his styles of painting, Oladesu (2004) asserts that, “sometimes, only the butterfly colours on its wings are used, at times it is the specks, the nobs, antenna or the combination of all. These are the features he adapts from the butterfly motif to execute his paintings”. The outcomes of these are notable in the collection of his paintings, in which he adapted the butterfly colours and patterns. He further states that, “with every flapping of the wings, different patterns are exposed at intervals”. Oladesu said, “This fundamental philosophical parallel in life brought about the dualistic style of rendering paintings that reflect his experience”. This view holds that the flapping of butterfly wings has philosophical perception in creating Oladesu’s art works.

Kehinde (2004) further speaks on Oladesu’s style to painting, quoting Michelangelo thus: “an artist paints with his brain, not with his hands”. The work of art is a product of careful thought by the artist, who composes the concept in his/her mind before executing it on the canvas. Kehinde agrees with this observation, asserting that “sometimes you see artists sit quietly as if they are doing nothing, it will surprise you to know that they are painting with their

brains.” This will turn to be well executed painting, a painting with concepts that are rendered in an articulated and organized manner, and a product of thoughtfulness on the part of the artist. A creative work of art does not just emerge on the canvas through the application of colours, but a product of coherent expression of thoughts, ideas, and feelings. This is also observed by Kehinde (2004) who asserts that, “Oladesu’s style of paintings, is an emergence of a mental process which takes place before or alongside the visual or physical reproduction”. After internalizing the concept, and subjecting the theme to a process of mental picture, the artist then represents his thought on canvas. His concept could be realism, expressionism or abstraction, which centers on everyday life, landscape, figure painting and other forms of works. Speaking on the kind of works he produces, Oladesu (2004) for instance remarks that, “I create art works that make some philosophical statements in life, works that are “thought-provoking, of things that bring hope, joy, love and relaxation to my viewers”. He defines the relevance of his works from the mental process to the finished painting, and that, his works should bring hope, joy, love and relaxation to the viewers.

This view is supported by Oguntona (2004) when he comments on the relevance of Oladesu’s paintings, saying that, “...in terms of environmental competence and relevance, Johnson Oladesu believes that his paintings can soothe, cool ailing nerves and cure the sick”. This is a personal view which the artist hopes to achieve through the production of his paintings. It is, however

important to examine the relevance of his paintings to the society. To confirm and support this statement, an article in THISDAY Newspaper of October 24,Th 2004, Oladesu narrates:

As we all know that hospitals in Nigeria cure only by giving drugs and operating on the physical body, while the inner being, mind and souls are ignored, most times wards are not painted, and beddings are stained. To administer the holistic cure, the inner being, the environment must be conducive

Oladesu has identified one of the groups he produces art works for, and the purpose of his works to be holistic healing for the sick, a mental and physical well being. The sick receiving medical attention, who are still depressed, worried, anxious and troubled could be helped psychologically by viewing paintings. Where the sick are mostly found happens to be the hospitals, so art works should be displayed in medical wards.

Oladesu further narrates his experience that, “When I had an accident and was admitted into a hospital for some time, the environment was not conducive, making healing very slow”. That was when he realized this, he discharged himself. When he got home, “... I ensured that the room where I laid was made conducive by putting up some paintings which were often changed to give the room a new look”. He associated the appearance of a room with paintings, to psychological perception of individuals who will respond with appreciation and in turn experience relief. According to Oladesu (2004), “...the healing process at home was faster”. The inner state, feelings and perception affect the physical

outlook most times. Thus, he embarked on hospital related art practice. It is a deliberate effort by the artist, to produce works for the hospital environment which he is concerned about.

In a related article in THISDAY Newspaper of Sunday October 24th, 2004, HRH Prince of Wales, was quoted to have made allusion to the relevance of wall paintings in a vision of Britain, thus:

it can't be easy to be healed in a soulless concrete box with characterless windows, in hospitable corridors and purely functional wards; the spirit needs healing as well as the body. Healing does not just take place on the physical level, but on the mental, emotional and the spiritual levels.

The observation is that, having colourful environment, even the hospital wards, with meaningful content on them, will help promote holistic well being of individuals who are within it. A similar view was reported by Nnabuike (2005), when he recommends that, "Paintings with selected colours and forms must be put up in hospitals to give hope, joy and strength to patients. This is in recognition of bringing things that appeal close to those who will appreciate and admire them most". This response will produce positive change, especially as it affects the emotions of the sick.

The art works produced by Oladesu Johnson, are limitless in purpose and scope of relevance. Onwudiwe (2004) observes that, "...hospitals patients, visitors, friends and families of patients, medical practitioners in hospitals, and the general public are to be beneficiaries of his paintings in terms of patronage".

When paintings are created, the general publics are people who may come to make purchase decision.

Oladesu Johnson has staged exhibitions in the course of his art practice. It was observed by Oguntona that some years back, he had the privilege of opening Oladesu's exhibition at Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and few years later they both participated in the Nogh-Nogh Art workshop at the same institution. This implies that Oladesu has been participating in exhibition, and has participated in not less than seven group exhibitions and five solo exhibitions within the period of this research.

In view of articles that have been reviewed and the comments of news reporters and professionals in the field of art, it is expected that Johnson Oladesu may have contributed to the development of artistic expression in modern Nigerian art. Therefore, a research should be made on his works to examine his activities and appropriate documentation made. It is the interest of this study, therefore, to carry out detailed documentation of Oladesu's art works and to examine the relevance of his art works in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This research is on Oladesu Johnson's style in modern Nigerian art, with focus on analyzing his paintings within a decade (1997 -2007). The researcher set out useful approaches that guided the discussion of the paintings and helped the realization of stated objectives. The methodology used by the researcher are discussed under the following concepts; Research design, Sampling, Literary source, Field work, Photographs and Analysis.

Research Design

A research work of this sort requires a careful approach that will result in meeting the stated objectives. The study of Johnson Oladesu's styles in modern Nigeria art requires a suitable method that will facilitate, guide and assist the researcher in gathering relevant information. Kerlinger (1977) describes research procedure as plans, structure and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and control variance.

The study of Johnson Oladesu's artworks and his style of painting in modern Nigeria Art, is thus accomplished with the use of the historical method of gathering information to answer specific research questions. This was suggested by Osuala (1982), and successfully adopted by Egonwa (1994), Saliu (1994) and Yohanna (2000). The historical method, allows the researcher to

categorize the paintings into three major aspects for analysis, obtain accurate account of the artist's styles from primary and secondary sources, and document them. In the course of this research, the researcher adopted historical method to document dates of works produced by the artist, to state the chronological progression of Oladesu's styles to his works, search for facts that answer the research questions and document other relevant information on the artist.

The analytical and descriptive approaches have also been found useful for this research; hence, the researcher adopted and used them effectively. The researcher used historical approach to interpret the information that was gathered. Descriptive approach aided the researcher to create a real and vivid picture of the artist's approach to his works. This is advocated by Obeka (2011) who states that, "Descriptive research is a type of research that provides full clarification of the variables being studied." While the analytical approach were used by the researcher to make detail analysis of Oladesu's paintings and styles. These were used by Saliu (1994), Ikiddeh (1997) and Yohanna (2000) in their researches.

Sources of Data

Sources of data dwell on information the researcher got from what others have written on the artist, that is, available literary materials on the artist. Previous researchers in art history like Egonwa (1991), Adepegba (1995), Babalola (1998), Saliu (1994) and Yohanna (2000) also adopted the use of

literary sources. The researcher obtained information on Oladesu from exhibition catalogues, magazines, newspapers and theses from Department of Fine Arts library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Research Population and Sampling

Sample is a portion, piece, or segment that is representative of a whole. In this study, the researcher selected works produced by Oladesu between 1997 and 2007. Twenty works that centered on various styles were selected, while at least, two works were sampled from each year. However, there are years that only a painting was accessed because the artist had no chronological records of works he produced within this period. The researcher adopted the simple random sampling technique to get the specific population for data analysis. Consequently, a total of twenty (20) works were sampled and used for this study.

Field work

The researcher used oral interview to obtain reliable information on the subject of study. This is a procedure the researcher used to obtain first hand information, otherwise called primary source of data collection. Oral interview was conducted with the artist through the cell phone, internet and several personal contacts. This was recommended by Adetoro (1997) and Obeka (2011) while Saliu (1994) and Yohanna (2000) are among researchers who utilized this

procedure in their researches. The researcher used structured and unstructured interview questions to get information from the artist, which in turn were used to analyze the artist's approach to his works as well as answer stated research questions. In addition, the researcher documented the responses from the artist in a note book, which enabled the researcher to have important information recorded in several places before he sorted and analyzed them.

The fieldwork, included observation and obtaining of detail information on the selected paintings in Oladesu's house/ studio. The researcher carefully observed the approach of the artist to his art works. Every observation was noted in writing for further analysis. This instrument is recommended by Fagg and Margaret (1964), Adetoro (1986), and has been articulated by Eyo (1997), Babalola (1980) and Sani (1998). These researchers utilized fieldwork to produce adequate documentation based on reliable information they gathered.

Photographs

Photographs of works produced by Johnson Oladesu within the period covered by the study were taken, to constitute pictorial documentation, and act as reference point for proper analysis. Such pictures of Oladesu's art works were used to highlight the styles and aesthetics in visual form. Eyo (1997), Fosu (1986), Saliu (1994), Yohanna (2000) and several other art historians used photographs in obtaining information for their researches. The photographs taken were critically analyzed to obtain detailed information in their works.

Data Analysis

When the fieldwork was completed, the researcher analyzed the information collected using the descriptive, historical and analytical approaches. The photographs of works collected for the study were carefully and effectively analyzed. Oladesu's artworks were categorized into different styles of paintings, as well as grouped according to years of their production. This was done to enhance proper analysis of the artist's approach to his works within the last decade, and to answer stated objectives of the study. The categorized works were carefully analyzed, while the researcher examined the artist's style to each work in the various groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF OLADESU'S PAINTINGS

Introduction

This section is centered on analysis of Oladesu Johnson's paintings. Available paintings by the artist covering the period of ten years (1997-2007) were studied. Although the artist produced several works within this period, he could not locate or trace those who bought most of his paintings within the specified period. In addition, the artist did not document all his paintings according to years of production. However, a total of twenty (20) works were selected within the period and analyzed. The analysis of Oladesu's works is under the following broad classifications: Sources of Oladesu's inspiration, Oladesu's styles of painting, and Relevance of Oladesu's paintings.

Sources of Oladesu's Inspiration

Oladesu Johnson was inspired to produce paintings at various stages of his academic and professional practice. The early stage can be seen from his experience before admission to a higher institution, his undergraduate days and after graduating. In response to interview granted to the researcher, he said, "In creating artworks, one must know that there are many stages, just like those in life. Environment, culture, education, personal philosophy and one's contemporaries are some of the factors that influence one". That is to say, at one

time or the other, Oladesu was inspired by his environment, culture, education, personal philosophy and his associates. Another major factor that inspires Oladesu is his mood. When commenting on his mood, he said that, whenever he is happy, excited or sad, he is inspired to paint. This shows that, notwithstanding the initial factors that inspire him, his mood also inspires him to create works.

The next stage of Oladesu's inspiration had a great boost following his Masters of Fine Arts research on adapting butterfly motif to painting. He said, "Using a butterfly in the research was all about how its motif could be adapted into painting". Since his Master's degree in painting, Oladesu's perspective, concept, themes among others, were largely inspired by butterfly. He added, "With every flapping of the wing, different patterns are exposed at intervals. This phenomenon, which has fundamental philosophical parallels in life, brought about the dualistic approach to my painting". Dualism is a concept that inspires Oladesu to see the two sides of the coin in issues of life. He has continued to produce works and experiment with butterfly motif. At another time, the artist was inspired to produce paintings as a result of his experience in a hospital after an auto accident.

The works analyzed under this category are; Vibration (plate I), Good morning (plate II), Confused democracy (plate III) and Harvest (plate IV).

Vibration: “Vibration” (plate I) is an abstract expressionism of butterfly executed in oil on canvas. The painting depicts butterfly and flower combined together as major focus of the work. From the left side of the painting, the butterfly is rendered in thin and thick brush strokes, swiftly and colourfully painted with blue, red, white, yellow and orange to enrich a rhythmic spatial balance. Red, yellow and orange were employed to depict the flowers and part of the butterfly. The use of lines and brush strokes is evidently seen all over the work. The butterfly and the flowers are looked upon as elements which could cause vibration that will either separate or unite the duo.

The artist has carefully executed this work in abstract expressionism, and the combination of butterfly and flower is an indication of the unity that exists between them. The artist said that he was inspired by his educational training to adapt the butterfly motif by painting butterfly and the flower because of the unity that exists among them, but in a distorted form using lines. Oladesu was inspired by his academic training to distort the butterfly and the flower, using thin and thick brushstrokes to create a different form. The educational training of most artists has inspired them to paint several works in their professional practice; worthy of note is Ben Enwonwu. Fosu (1986) notes that “Ben may paint or carve in calm academic realism”. The influence of educational training cannot be relegated in the works of modern Nigerian artists.



Plate I: Vibration. 1998. Oil on canvas. 40.5x50.5cm, Artist's collection

Good Morning: This painting titled 'Good Morning' (Plate II) was executed in 1999. It is oil on canvas, measuring 152cm x 102cm. The painting is in the private collection of Professor Abba, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The composition is a landscape painting in which the artist represented butterflies in their natural habitat where trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers are attractive objects to butterflies. The artist's choice of colours in this work was consciously and carefully made to represent the natural environment where butterflies hover around. Yellowish-green and light blue were employed in painting the sky, to convey an illusion of distance, while the red, purple and ultramarine blue used on the foreground suggest closeness.

The painting depicts a morning scene, when butterflies fly from one object of interest to another. Oladesu used realistic style in this composition,

which was an early painting he produced during his study of adapting butterfly motif in painting. The sources of Oladesu's inspiration in this work are the environment and the butterfly motif, which studio practice enabled him to explore. Oguntona (2004) remarks: "Art graduates usually put distance between themselves and their studio. Happily enough, Oladesu is not one of them". This makes him to share similar sources of inspiration with artist like Gani Odutokun. Okeke (1995) asserts that, "The only determinant of the sources from which Gani got his inspirations were technical-studio exigencies and the changing environment". Gani did not divorce himself from his studio; this resulted in great inspiration with which he turned out great works. This is a similar observation with the commitment of Oladesu to his studio practice.

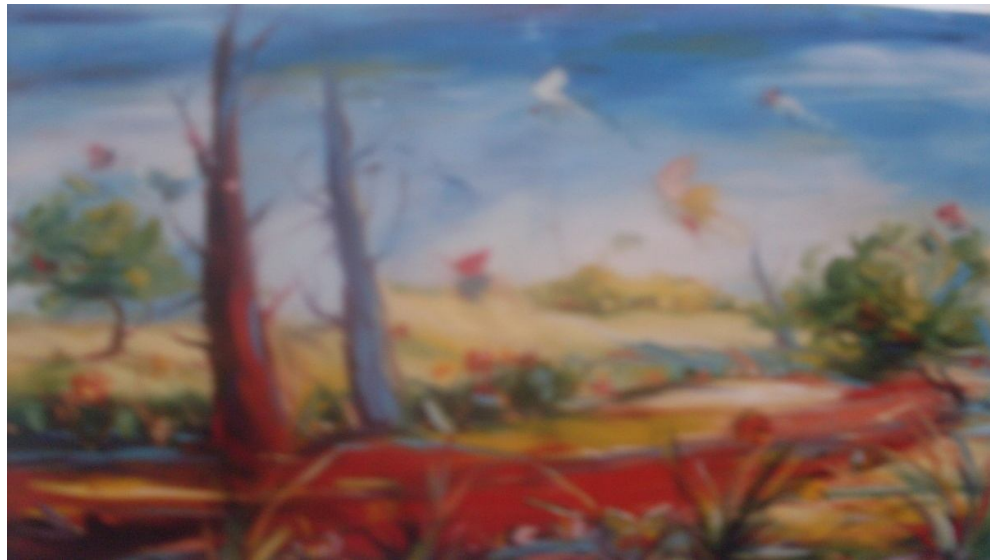


Plate II: "Good Morning", 1999, Oil on Canvas, 152x102cm. Collection of Professor Steve Abba

Confused Democracy: "Confused Democracy" (plate III), is an abstract work, which was executed in 1999, measuring 91cm x 91cm. The work is in the collection of Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. This painting depicts human figures in silhouette in between the two wings of the butterfly stretched to the right and left sides to portray the transition from military rule to civil government in 1999. According to Oladesu, Some of the figures in silhouette are on the wing that is painted red, while others are on the wing painted blue to depict his perceived confusion, which emanated from the emergence of Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, as a civilian president, although once a military officer. The confusion arose from concern in the minds of the people if actually military are no more ruling, and if bloodshed would no longer continue. According to Oladesu, "The painted red wing symbolizes bloodshed which characterized the era of military rule in Nigeria, while the wing painted blue signifies the democratic government which was installed".

The artist reflected on the two sides to governance (dualism), which he expressed with the wings of the butterfly, democracy painted blue and military regime painted red. Onwudiwe (2005) reports that, "These patterns of the butterfly have a basic philosophy which is on the same level in life. This spurred him into creating a dualistic approach to painting which reflects on his experience. He has a dual citizenship of both Ghana and Nigeria". The author adds that the title may be linked with "Confused Democracy". Oladesu was inspired to relate the flapping of butterfly wing and the patterns on the butterfly

with issues in life, which he looks at with a dual view. Okeke (1995) asserts that, “To Uche Okeke, the ideologue (a zealous supporter of the ideology) of the Zaria Art Society, uli became the art form upon which he founded his new art”. Uche Okeke is one of such artists who founded his art from visual elements in the society, and used them in several works.



Plate III: Confused Democracy, 1999, oil on Canvas, 91x91cm, Artist’s collection.

Harvest: “Harvest” (plate IV) is an oil painting executed in 2007, measuring 75cm x 60cm. The work is in a private collection of Hetta hospital, Otta. The painting is a realistic approach in which the artist represents a village scene during harvest, which is usually towards the end of the year. Oladesu was captivated by the scenario of village setting beneath a calm blue sky, when the villagers begin to harvest farm produce. The atmosphere at this time is not the usual hot weather, but hazy and cold. In this landscape painting, the settlement

is seemly deserted because of the harvest activities, as not a single person is seen around the settlement.

This village scene is represented in the horizon with tones and shades of brown, blue and white , while trees and plants are depicted behind the houses in tones of blue and green, showing the effect of clear bright light distributed all over. Oladesu expressed his appreciation for village settlement during harvest time, in a naturalistic approach with the use of thin brushstrokes, which makes the structures to stand out from its background directing viewer's gaze to the same.

Philosophically, the artist displayed his concept of dualism in this work by portraying the harvest time, which is a result of sowing during the raining season and reaping during the dry season. This work was inspired by the philosophy of dualism and the environment, because the artist found relevant transcultural tradition of harvest in villages a useful visual symbol to portray. Ottenberg (1997) comments on Uche Okeke saying, "Okeke drew from both Igbo and northern cultures, the northern generally more realistically than the Igbo". Kenneth C. Murray encouraged his students in Nigeria to imbibe cultural attitude to art. Oloidi (1995) states that, Kenneth Murray urged them to "be local in your conception, interpretation, characterization and general attitude to art". Oladesu is not limited to painting cityscape and relegating local visual symbols, but employs all aspects of the environment as he is inspired to do.



Plate IV: Harvest, 2007, oil on canvas, 75x60cm, Hetta Hospital, Otta

Oladesu's Styles of Painting

This artist has been painting since 1986, with his first painting being a realistic portrait of his elder brother. Since then, he has produced paintings for at least two decades, and participated in several groups and solo exhibitions.

Oladesu's styles of painting are classified into three major periods, namely, Stage I: the period after Bachelor of Arts degree, Stage II: the period of Masters of Fine Arts degree and Stage III: the period after masters of art degree. The features that characterize the works he produced during Stage I, the period after Bachelor of Arts degree, are freedom of expression in the choice of subject matter and use of colours. The themes were centered on the environment; his landscape paintings show effect of perspective and use of strong brushstrokes in applying bright colours as well as dark colours in different works. His major

styles were realism and abstraction which are evident in “Abeokuta Itaoku” (plate V), and “Polo” (plate VI). Stage II: the period of Masters of Arts degree is marked with experiments in adapting butterfly motif, executing concepts with philosophical expressions which the artist refers to as dualism, adapting colours from the butterfly for all forms of work, and the use of different styles like realism, abstraction, expressionism and impressionism. The style associated with his application of colours in embellishing a finished painting is Dot-linearism. This is observed in his use of specks and thin lines across the surface of finished painting. Distortions of the butterfly motif with thin and thick brushstrokes are evident in lines of bright and dull colours which can be seen in “Vibration” (plate I) and “Refection” (plate VII). One of the realistic paintings of this period is “Good Morning” (plate II). It is a landscape of butterfly habitat which is executed with a concept of the natural environment, and perspective is fully evident. Other works that were executed using abstraction and impressionism are “Confused Democracy” (plate III) and “Butterfly Landscape” plate (VIII).

Oladesu (2004) asserts that, “Sometimes, only the butterfly colours on its wings are used, at times it is the specs, the nobbs, antenna or the combination of all”. He used butterfly in his research and subsequent works for the sole aim of adapting its motif into painting. Butterflies inspired most of his paintings that were analyzed within the period of his research. He started by collecting them so as to explore their different types, colours and the various patterns on them.

The third stage of his works and styles is the period after Masters of Fine Art degree.

Oladesu said, “The major styles I use in executing my paintings are realism, expressionism and abstractionism” He added by saying that ‘I am an impressionist’, which means, there are works he executes using impressionism. Despite the use of these styles, Oladesu embellished finished paintings with dots and thin strokes so as to create an identity in his works, which the researcher refers to as Dot-linearism. The swift and wavy pattern in which the butterfly flies is evident in some of the works, like “Reflection” (plate VII) and “Break Fly” (plate XII). This is applicable to works he produced from 1999-2007. Nnabuike (2004) reports that, “Oladesu derives inspiration from butterfly both for realistic pictures (paintings) and abstracts. He equally turns out figure paintings, landscapes and drawings from his studies of butterfly”. He further shares the same view with Oladesu on the styles he employs in executing his paintings, no matter the subject. The works analyzed in this third stage were executed with realism and impressionism. These works are titled; “Before he Rides” (plate IX), which is a composition of a man riding on horseback, and “East or West” (plate X), an impressionistic painting in which the artist reflects on a national issue of concern in the area of segregation of citizens residing in geopolitical zones other than theirs.

Stage I: The Period After First Degree

Abeokuta-Itaoku: This painting (plate V), is a realistic work which was executed in 1997, a representation of a cityscape. Shops are depicted on both sides of the road. The use of perspective is evident as depth and distance are created, while tints and shades of blue, brown and purple were used to show the effect of a cool and bright atmosphere on the far background and the composition in general. To the immediate foreground is a woman backing a baby and carrying a basin with goods on her head, an indication of the struggle that some nursing mothers go through to make ends meet.



Plate V: Abeokuta-Itaoku, 1997, oil on canvas, 78x109cm, Dr.Olusumade collection, Otta.

The artist used thick application of paint and distinctive brushstrokes to render this realistic painting. According to the artist, “The environmental influence which inspired me is the everyday life and my appreciation for

landscape which is seen in this composition of market scene along a busy road” This is similar to the observation made by Mounts (1973) on Uche Okeke when he reports that, “Okeke is concerned with varied categories of subject matter in his paintings. He also paints scenes from everyday life, landscapes and abstract murals”. Okeke painted scenes from everyday life in which he promoted Uli aesthetic features as well as landscapes that focus on the society.

Oladesu achieved balance by carefully representing buildings at the center of the background as well as on the right and left sides of the painting, indicating residential area merged with a market where the selling and buying activities are building up.

Polo: “Polo” (plate VI) is an oil painting done in 1997. The work portrays a polo game in which two opposing players on horsebacks, attempt to drive a small ball through each other’s goal by means of mallets. In this painting, the artist captured the movement of one of such horses, while the rider is depicted on the horseback in such a way that he is not too visible because the interest of the artist is in the movement of the horses during a polo game.

The work is in shades of brown on the horse and around it, patches of red, purple and white, while shades of navy blue and magenta used on the background to the right side of the painting create shade. The artist used brushstrokes to blend the colours into one another, and had thin brushstrokes in certain parts. The centre of interest, which is clearly represented in realism, is

the head of the horse. The artist blended the form with the background of the work. The work is relevant in documenting and promoting the game of polo in Nigeria.



PlateVI: Polo, 1997, oil on canvas, 78x109cm, private collection

Oladesu produced this work before he started exploring the butterfly. His style of painting as seen on the horse shows realism in the elaborate treatment of details, but used an impressionistic style on the figure. He concentrated on the general tone on the figure rather than elaborate details. This perspective is likened to some works that Uche Okeke produced. Ottenberg (1997) reports that, “A striking aspect of Okeke’s art in Enugu is a series of oil painting that he produced in 1965. Larger works than his pen and ink works and prints, they are

generally dark in tone. These paintings are frequently in shades of brown and the dark yellows, with dark blues and greens here and there”.

Stage II: The Period of Master of Fine Arts Degree

Reflection



Plate VII: Reflection, 1998, Oil on canvas, 91cm x 91cm, Prof. Jacob Jari collection

“Reflection” (plate VII) is oil on canvas painting executed in 1998. This painting is an abstract expressionism showing a butterfly with double wings on the right side. This work shows a painting bare of texture and decoration except some curved lines used to portray the form of the butterfly. The background is rendered in white, blue and yellow brush strokes, thinly and smoothly employed to create reflection. Oladesu created an additional wing of butterfly on the right side which is neatly fused to the natural one. The additional wing is rendered in

tonal gradation of yellow and red, while the main wing on the right side is executed in red, orange, yellow and blue with lines to portray the possibility in life of things not appearing as they seem. The immediate foreground is rendered to convey an illusion of swift movement in an upward direction from the right side of this painting. This is done to illustrate the swift movement of butterflies.

Oladesu used expressionism as a style to execute this butterfly painting, highlighting the use of cool and warm colours, thereby supporting his claim that “Sometimes, only the butterfly colours on its wings are used”. The application of colours on the right side of this work shows brightness, while the left side shows dark colours. Artists like Gani Odutokun and Sani Mu’azu among others did extensive work in their application of colours. Commenting on Gani’s choice and use of colour, Fosu (1986) notes that, “Gani has experimented with colour symbolism. Earth colours, he says, represent the known. He employs this often in his landscapes which are usually inspired by Hausa traditional designs. Blue is basic to him, and he must always return to it”. For Oladesu, his choice and use of colours after the year 2000 is inspired by the butterfly motif.

Butterfly landscape: "Butterfly landscape" (plate VIII) is an oil painting done in 1999. The artist used an impressionistic style to execute this landscape painting with effect of brushstrokes permeating the work.

Viewing this polychromatic painting from the foreground through the line of horizon to the background, the colour usage creates a harmonious sensation

which combines warm and cool colours of red, yellow, purple, blue and green for an unusual landscape painting. The artist represented different wings of butterfly which are closely merged to create an impression of relationship that exists among the different types of butterfly and the various forms in which they appear. The artist was influenced by the shapes or forms of the butterfly wings to convey a different illusion, as well as how his impressionistic and abstract styles can be applied to landscape.

Philosophical view of this work revolves round the concept of dualism, which the artist said can serve dual purposes in a landscape painting. Its wings can be used to create the background as well as the foreground both in form and colour usage. Oladesu adapted the butterfly motif to landscape painting as was reported by Nnabuike (2004) who notes that, “Oladesu derives inspiration from butterfly both for realistic pictures (paintings) and abstracts. He equally turns out figure paintings, landscapes and drawings”. The execution of this painting reflects his style, the butterfly forms and patterns, choice and application of colours which he graciously adapted. Obiora Udechukwu executed some of his works in a related style. Egonwa (1994) comments on Obiora’s later work noting that, “...his forms are now completely purged of all non-essentials even as colours become pure and luminous. Nevertheless, the works are bold oscillating between the abstract and the expressionistic tendencies.” In this observation, forms Obiora employs in painting are conspicuous, colour usages

are bright and styles are abstract and expressionistic, which is typical of Oladesu's style in this work.



Plate VIII: Butterfly landscape, 1999, oil on canvas, 79.5x59.3cm, Artist's collection.

Stage III: The Period After Master of Fine Arts:

Before He Rides:

“Before He Rides” (plate IX) is a realistic and naturalistic representation of a man riding on horseback, executed in oil on canvas. The title suggests that before the man rose to ride on horseback, he had gone through a lot of challenges, struggles, planning, and preparation for the exalted and royal position. This is a polychromatic painting in which the artist used cool and warm colours to express the royalty, high attainment and achievement.



Plate IX: Before He Rides, 2002, oil on canvas, 90x90 cm, Collection of the artist.

Tones and shades of colours in blue, purple, yellow and green, which are associated with success and achievement, were employed to execute this work. The composition is made with the technique of thin and thick application of pigments, using brushstrokes to create smooth and rough textures on the surface of the painting. The specs and antenna of butterfly were employed on the painting to signify the adaptation of butterfly motif and the finished state of the work. The specs are represented in dots of various colours, while the lines across the painting are the adaptation of the antenna features used to distinguish the finished work.

The major influence on the artist emanates from the environment, where horses are used to identify with royal elevation. The dualism application in this

work is “a rise from being a no body yesterday, to becoming somebody today”, through concerted effort. This is the artist’s perception of two sides to issues from the flapping of the butterfly wings. There is no sudden rise without any prior preparation, sacrifice and price paid.

Oladesu’s style in this work is in form of realism. He gave a detailed description of the human figure which is a common appearance of a northern male of Nigeria. The form of the horse is also with realistic treatment in traditional regalia, which follow celebration of elevation to a higher height. Oladesu used this style to promote productive labour. According to the artist, the butterfly motif inspires him to produce realistic paintings which are not limited to a particular theme. Finally, he permeated this work with colourful dots and thin brushstrokes across the canvas, thereby creating an identity for his style which is Dot-linearism.

East or West: “East or West” (plate X) is an oil painting executed in 2005, which is currently in the collection of the artist. This painting is an impressionistic illustration of geographical identification of Nigerians who either belong to the the east, south, north or the west. The painting is an impressionistic perception of the segregation that exists among the geopolitical groups of Nigeria

This painting is a philosophical perception of the two sides of life which the artist sees in the butterfly. In spite of the fact that Nigerians cut across the

north, the south, the east and the west, there is discrimination against someone from eastern part living in the western part and vice versa. It is important to observe that, a Nigerian must be from east or west, north or south. The artist represented vertical stripes across the canvas which are standing erect, while he employed yellow, orange and red stripes of colours tilted to the left side of the canvas. This is illustrating the east, while the movement of yellow, orange and red stripes from the immediate foreground tilted to the right side symbolizes the west.

The artist carefully employed loose and heavy brushstrokes to illustrate the effect and movement of the wind, while dominant colours used are tones of purple, yellow, blue and red showing nearness. Oladesu consciously employed the butterfly patterns and colours to specific areas on the canvas, which are seen as dots of blue, orange and ultramarine blue to compliment the colours used.

Oladesu no doubt, used impressionistic style to execute this work with a general idea, rather than an exact representation or description on the canvas. This is so, because, as Oladesu said, he is an impressionist who chooses the use of wild and interesting brushstrokes to render this work, with colours adapted from the butterfly wings. Oladesu is peculiar in the execution of this painting because it is a product of his discovery in the use of butterfly motif. The concept is a product of dualism, as the artist sees the populace of Nigeria to either belong to the east or the west, north or south, but segregated against, because of the area they hail from.



Plate X: East or West 2005, oil on canvas, 40x50cm. Collection of the artist

A peculiar and common feature in works that Oladesu adapted the butterfly colours is the use of light and dark blue, white, yellow, purple, orange and red. It is observed that, a particular colour within this scheme dominates a painting, while others are applied faintly. Examples are the landscape painting titled 'Isale- Eko' (plate XI) and the still- life painting titled 'Break Fly' (plate XII). His colour scheme is luminous, forms are conspicuous, and brush strokes are thin and thick in application, thereby creating texture on the canvas.

Closely related in colour scheme to 'Isale- Eko' and 'Break Fly' are 'East or West' (plate X), 'Crash' (plate XIV) and 'Modern Gwari Woman' (plate XV). The colours used are light and dark purple, blue, green yellow, white, orange and patches of red. Remarkably, these three paintings were executed

with ornamentations of dots, thin brushstrokes across the figure, objects and surface of the paintings. These symbolize the adaptation of butterfly motif, specifically the specs, nobs, and antenna on a finished work. “Flowers” plate XIII, is also a painting executed using realism to represent flowers clustered in a place.

However, there are other works in the collection of this research that were executed with entirely different colour schemes. Examples are works like ‘Birth’, ‘Fruits’, ‘Polo’ and ‘Butterfly landscape’. The use of warm colours alone and polychromatic colours are evident, but the most striking and identifiable visual features of Oladesu’s works is the adaptation of the butterfly patterns, specs, nobs, antenna, colours and the dualism concept. Notwithstanding the style of work- realism, expressionism, impressionism or abstraction, his treatment of the canvas is not complete without skillful arrangement of dots and lines across the canvas, this the researcher calls Dot-linearism.

Isale- Eko: “Isale-Eko” (plate XI) is a realistic expression of a busy street executed in oil on canvas. The title of this work is the name of a place in Lagos. The painting which is in the artist's collection is a composition of buying and selling activities taking place in a market beside the road and buildings at the background, umbrellas in front of shops and vehicles parked at the center of activities, with people moving in different directions to purchase valuables.



Plate XI: Isale-Eko, 2002, oil on canvas, 59.5x39.5cm, collection of the artist.

The artist displayed his appreciation and skillfulness in representing buildings that are clustered with roofs which are close, but facing different directions from the smallest structures to the biggest. Notwithstanding the clustered nature of the buildings and the environment, the artist was able to create distinction through his choice and application of the colours employed on the roofs, buildings, umbrellas, cars and the figures in general. The artist's choice of colour, shows his appreciation for bright colours- blue, white, yellow, pink and purple, and the movement that characterizes a busy street.

An outstanding feature in this painting is the general treatment of the composition. The artist employed realistic style in representing all the elements, while tones on the forms are well defined to create a distinction in this landscape painting. Colours applied are peculiar to Oladesu, because they were adapted from the butterfly and no two artists will apply colours the same way.

Abiodun (2004) comments on attainment of unique works, stating that, “Oladesu also forged ahead to become an authority over intricacies of the said working style, technique and a manner of a particular art, which also makes his works original and unique.” Working with particular styles, and making effort to get over the difficulties associated therein, like Oladesu did in this painting, makes his works original and unique.

Break Fly: "Break fly" (plate XII) is a realistic work, which was executed in oil on canvas. This painting is a representation of a tea cup and slices of bread flying away from the table. The background of this painting is executed in thick and thin brushstrokes from the left side to the middle, while the right side is executed with thin brush strokes to create smooth and rough textures on the canvas.

Dominant colours applied on the background are tones and shades of blue and purple with patches of yellow to convey sensation of a serene home, where tea cup is placed on a table. The tea inside the cup is painted with green, purple and yellow, with the evaporating vapour rendered in brushstrokes of purple and blue from the middle of a hot tea usually served in the morning.

The concept of this painting is the difficulty and inability of people to put breakfast on their tables. Breakfast is now far from the reach of many Nigerians, even though they wish and desire it. The concept of “Break fly” is peculiar because, the artist employed a colour scheme which is typical of his research on

butterfly. The application of bright colours with little shade at the background shows Oladesu's appreciation for the treatment of light, shade and shadow. Commenting on his style, Oladesu (2004) asserts that "Sometimes, only the butterfly colours on its wings are used". In this painting, he limited his adaptation of butterfly motif to the colours, and illustrated the bread flying away from the table, like a butterfly will fly away from flowers.



Plate XII: Break fly, 2004, Oil on canvas, 90cm x 90cm, Prof. Steve Abba, ABU, Zaria.

Flowers: This painting titled "Flowers" (plate XIII) was executed in 2007. It is an oil on canvas, measuring 90cm x 60cm and currently in Mrs. Olumide's collection. The painting is a composition of flowers that are clustered within the same place. This painting is a realistic representation of flowers that are blooming in varieties, as some are large, others are small and they are arranged in

a curve to a budding flower on the top right side of the painting. The large flowers cover the top left side to the middle foreground of the canvas, while the yellow flowers in the middle of the painting create a link with flowers on the right side to give the work balance.

Oladesu executed the painting with thick application of colours with brushstrokes well blended into one another, geared towards creating a smooth texture on the canvas. The colours used in the composition are rich tones of red, blue, green, purple, yellow and orange, distributed on the flowers, background and foreground to create movement, relationship and make the flowers stand out. His application of colours, use of lines on forms and illumination brings out a visual expression of beauty.

Abiodun (2004) asserts that, “the artist develops the capacity of preference for medium, style and colour spectrum, which becomes his identity.” The medium used by Oladesu for this work is oil on canvas, while his style is realism, and his colours are cool and warm. He applied the colours on the flowers to show a flow from one flower to the other, like the butterflies coexist in their habitats in spite of differences in colours and sizes. The artist created a contrast in the forms and application of colours to mark his identity.



Plate XIII: Flowers, 2007, oil on canvas, 90x60cm, Mrs.Olumid collectionOtta.

Crash: “Crash” (plate XIV) is a painting done in an abstract expressionism, of plane crash that dominated the Nigerian aviation sector at some point, executed in oil on canvas. The painting is in the private collection of Omoyiola, Otta. The painting shows an explosion in several directions resulting from a plane crash and is executed in thick brushstrokes to create a rough texture on the canvas. This polychromatic painting is an impressionistic approach by the artist, who decided to spot the crash on the extreme right of the canvas and balanced it with the linear effects of brushstrokes to the left side of the work. A combination of cool and warm colours, blue, purple, red and orange were used to express the explosion, while the application of colours in thick brushstrokes was used to capture the devastating effect of the crash.

The artist employed colour dots and lines of green, purple, blue and orange on the canvas, representing specs, nobs and antenna that are found on the butterfly. He finds the use of specs on a finished painting to be features that add to the aesthetic value of the work.

The artist was influenced to paint 'Crash', after a plane crashed in the south west of Nigeria and called to remembrance several others within a short space of time. He recounted the devastation arising from such crashes, and related to the flapping of butterfly's wings which he considered to be philosophical, having the positive and the negative sides. Travelling by air gets one to his/her destination within the shortest time, but a crash will shatter the passengers.



***Plate XIV: Crash, 2005, oil on canvas, 107.5x39cm, Omoyiola's collection
Otta, Ogun State.***

It is worthy of note to observe that, Oladesu adapted the various elements of the butterfly motif in executing this painting. From the colours employed to

the specs unto the nobs and the antenna, he adapted the butterfly motif. This painting is peculiar and unique in the sense that, it is an embodiment of Oladesu's inspiration, thought, style and adaptation of butterfly motif in a holistic sense. His expression is without any treatment of forms, but a strong brush work juxtaposed from the point of plane crash on the extreme right side of the canvas through the center, lower and upper left sides of this work.

Modern Gwari Woman: “Modern Gwari Woman” (plate XV) is a realistic work, measuring 88cm x 75cm. It is a composition of a Gwari woman. The Gwari are a group of people whose women are known to carry load on the back of their necks, behind their shoulders.

A careful look at this work shows clearly, that brushstrokes were employed to execute the work with smooth effect resulting from blending of the colours applied on the woman, the load on her back and the background. The woman is bowed beneath the weight of load on her, in a moving posture, to depict how women transport goods from one place to another, covering a long distance. Though it was not easy for traditional Gwari women to bow beneath heavy loads, modern Gwari women still carry on with this tradition.

The artist had to employ the specs and antenna of the butterfly on the surface of the painting to promote his practice of adapting butterfly motif. These specs are in form of dots strategically distributed in colours of yellow, purple, red and white, while the antenna are thin brushstrokes of bright colours to

signify a seal on a finished painting that creates a different appearance on the canvas.



Plate XV: Modern Gwari Woman, 2002, 86x75cm, collection of the artist.

The influence on Oladesu and his choice of subject is the appearance of modern Gwari women, which is a departure from the relatively nude outfit of the traditional women when carrying their goods or loads.

Identifiable features which mark this work out to be unique and peculiar to Oladesu is, the distribution of dots, antenna- lines across the canvas, which is the embellishment called Dot-linearism and the colours used. Oladesu (2004) said that, “only the butterfly colours on its wings are used, at times it is the specs, the nobs, antenna or a combination of all”. In this work, he combines all the elements he adapts from the butterfly motif to execute a realistic cultural

concept. The realistic style is geared towards projecting cultural rehabilitation and upholding cultural heritage

Relevance of Oladesu's Paintings

Oladesu believes that his paintings are relevant to the society in a number of ways. This is because the themes are community based, the contents have messages driven towards correcting certain ills in the society, to encourage good virtues, have aesthetic functions, and give hope to the sick on hospital beds. Reporting Oladesu's plans, Onwudiwe (2005) said, "Paintings with selected colours and forms must be put up in the hospitals to give hope, joy and strength to patients". Hospitals at home and abroad are among Oladesu's targeted beneficiaries, so as to bring hope, joy, love and relaxation to his viewers. In a related article, Oguntona (2004) asserts that, "in terms of environmental competence and relevance, Oladesu believes that his paintings can soothe, cool ailing nerves and cure the sick". This belief of healing through paintings influenced Oladesu to embark on hospital project, through which his paintings would be distributed to hospitals to promote psychological healing, among others. Oladesu (2004) states that, "the beneficiaries of this project are the patients, medical staff, patient's visitors, friends or families, medical practitioners, artists and the society at large". The relevance of his paintings is not limited to the hospital environment but the society at large. Few examples of such paintings are discussed below.

Blood on Calvary: "Blood on Calvary"(plate XVI) is oil on canvas painting executed in 2005, measuring 65cm x 65cm, and in the collection of Mrs. Omoyiola, Otta, Ogun State. The composition is a symbolic representation of Calvary cross on which, Jesus Christ was crucified along with two others. The cross, painted with tones of yellow and stripes of red, from the top down to the foreground, is typical of the blood that flowed when Jesus Christ was crucified.

The crosses on both left and right sides of the canvas, are receding from the one executed in between the duo, in yellow and droplets of red, a deliberate attempt to project the significance of the cross that is closer. In executing the background, the artist employed tones of blue on the sky, to give it an effect of atmospheric change that occurred when Jesus Christ was crucified. The two crosses are situated among rocks which are painted blue at the horizon and blue white, yellow and purple in the middle and immediate foreground, are also used.

Oladesu is expressionistic in this work, considering the fact that, a cross without a human figure on it, cannot bleed, although he chose to capture the crosses after those crucified on them were taken away. The painting is a brush work done with thick brushstrokes from the background to the foreground to create a rough texture on the canvas. Oladesu balanced this work with thick application of navy blue on the right side of the sky with the crosses on the left side.



Plate XVI: Blood on Calvary, 2005, Oil on canvas. 65cm x 65cm. Collection of Mrs. Omoyiola

This work is relevant in reminding Christians and mankind of the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross of Calvary. It is also relevant to men and women seeking God's mercy and salvation that to come by faith to the cross at Calvary, they will find it. This work is not limited in its relevance, but targets the wider society who will discover hope and joy.

Birth: "Birth" (plate XVII) is an expressionistic work, which was executed in oil on canvas. It is currently in the collection of Elephant Cement Company, Ewekoro, Ogun state. The painting is an expression of what happens at the time a woman goes through labour pains to the hour she is delivered of the baby.

This painting, which is rich in vertical, curved and horizontal display of lines resulting from thick application of brushstrokes in colours consisting of red and yellow, is symbolic of severe loss of blood that accompanies delivery of

babies. Other colours used to compliment the warm colours in this composition are brown, white, blue, green and black. The center of focus is the point from which the brush strokes go in different directions; this is to the left side of the work painted black, in form of a pyramid. The new baby is covered with curved lines seen as blood and placenta lying on the lower left side of the painting. The foreground is painted with different patches of colours blended into one another, considered to be the effect of lost blood, which created movement and harmony.

The philosophical view of the painting is centered on the fact that, when a baby is delivered, there is joy that accompanies it, but people do not remember labour pains, bleeding and other sufferings that the mother went through. This presents the two sides of life, negative and positive, sadness and joy.

This painting is relevant in inspiring women to be hopeful, to take courage and stir up their faith in God, to see their expectation of becoming mothers realized. It is also relevant in reassuring expectant women who have longed for a successful delivery, that they will certainly have their babies, like the Aquaba dolls believed to help the barren and pregnant women in Ghana.



Plate XVII: Birth 2006, oil on canvas, 85x75cm, Elephant Cement Company, Ogun State.

Fruit: This painting (plate XVIII), which is a realistic and naturalistic work, and executed in 2007, is a rich composition of fruits. Definitive lines and thick brushstrokes were employed to depict the fruits, making the forms conspicuous, while the colours applied on the fruits are polychromatic showing the artist's appreciation for cool and warm colours.

The artist's choice as well as application of cool and warm colours of blue, green, red, yellow, orange and white on the fruits, made the subject to advance. Distribution of light and shade brings solidity and illumination to the painting, while the arrangement of the fruits allows perspective to have its distinctive effect of depth and distance.



Plate XVIII: Fruit, 2007, oil on canvas, 60x75cm, Dr. Deke's collection.

Oladesu's approach to this work shows his appreciation of nature, thereby, employing colours which enhanced this appearance and creating a feeling of realism, when viewing the fruits.

This painting is relevant in promoting the intake of natural fruits, which in turn will promote good health. It is also relevant, in encouraging people generally, to cultivate the habit of appreciating the natural environment. Another relevance of this painting is in its perceived psychological healing effect on ailing patient. Commenting on the purpose of his paintings, Oladesu (2005) asserts that, "I hope to produce art works for hospitals which will help to civilize the environment, works that are attractive for patients to view while waiting for doctors". The relevance of some of his works is to civilize the hospital environment and appeal to the emotions of patients.

Olumo Rock Abeokuta: “Olumo Rock Abeokuta” (plate XIX) is an oil painting done in 2004, measuring 177x90cm. The painting is in the collection of General Olusegun Obasanjo. Olumo Rock is located in the center of Abeokuta city in Ogun State. The location of Olumo Rock is a site of traditional ceremonies and celebrations. This is a landscape painting in which the artist represents rocks clustered together, small trees depicted on top of the rocks with people around, an indication of the beauty in a natural environment.

Celebration and ceremony scenes are common events in the south west of Nigeria, a region where Olumo Rock is located. This accounts for the choice of a site that will enhance the mood and spirit of celebration. The painting has a composition of people in groups in the foreground and around the rock, a sight which shows friends, families, peers and love ones staying together to celebrate and rejoice beneath a calm blue sky blended with tones of purple and white. The rocks are executed in varying shades and tints of brown, yellow and white to create the natural view of Olumo rock. There is reflection of highlight on the right side of the work, with smooth application of colours blended to create smooth texture on the canvas.

The artist balances the composition from the foreground to the background and creates variation in his application of colours, employing rich tones of colours on the figures to show nearness and tints of the same colours at the background to show depth and distance. Oladesu approaches this painting

with a realistic style, while his brushstrokes are blended to create flow of colours into one another. The use of perspective is evident.

Recreation centers, sites of celebration will be promoted and patronized in our society, through an aesthetic work of art like this. In a hospital, a work of this kind will be relevant in reassuring a patient of hope to recover and be in a place of celebration, in addition to the aesthetic value of the work. Irabor (2007) observes that, "Psychology plays a prominent role in the beauty of art and there is no Art without aesthetic value. Aesthetics is to express attraction, appreciation and admiration". Those who are hospitalized, have a measure of appreciation for art works notwithstanding their state of health. Speaking on the relevance of his works during an exhibition titled 'Dualism', Oladesu (2004) asserts that, "I have come, so that we can help humanity in the area of psychological cure that goes beyond aesthetics'. In his opinion, his works have qualities for psychological cure, which will help ease tension, worry and anxiety in patients.



*Plate XIX: Olumo Rock Abeokuta, 2004, oil on canvas, 177x90cm,
Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo*

Peace and Harmony: “Peace and harmony” (plate XX), a realistic work, which was executed in 2001, is a representation of a woman in a restive mood. The work is in the artist's collection. This painting which depicts a woman resting in the comfort of her room and painted with blue and white colours, is an expression of the cool and calm atmosphere around her. It is a representation of the serenity that could characterize a place of rest. The artist’s choice of subject is to emphasize and encourage the need for rest after a busy day so as to regain strength and get refreshed.

The background of this work and the immediate foreground are rendered in tones of yellow, green, red and blue with thin brushstrokes used to blend these colours. There is highlight behind the figure, typifying the peace and harmony in the work. The artist employed dots which are symbolic of the

butterfly specs, which he adapted as a feature or seal on a finished painting at the background and foreground.

Rest is foreign to most of us in Nigeria, except at night. This work is relevant in promoting, encouraging and making people desire rest, although not to the detriment of urgent work. Rest will be achieved when the environment is restful and conducive. Oguntona (2004) comments on Oladesu's view of his painting, asserts that, "he sees his work as therapeutic". Therapy in this painting is seen to center on rest, as an act of maintaining health especially after exertion.



Plate XX: Peace and Harmony. 2001, Oil on canvas, 90cm x 90cm, Artist's collection.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The entire discussions in chapters one to four were attempts to highlight the styles, inspiration, uniqueness and relevance of Oladesu Johnson's art works. In this chapter therefore, the summary of research findings are presented upon which conclusion, recommendations and suggestions are made.

Summary

Oladesu Johnson has been a practicing artist before 1997, when he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Since his graduation however, he has intensified effort to make significant progress. Yet, there is no scholarly documentation of his art works. This research is centered on Oladesu's styles in modern Nigerian art (paintings), the motif used, sources of inspiration, peculiarity and relevance of his paintings.

Chapter one of this study discusses introduction to styles in modern Nigerian arts, Oladesu's background in modern paintings, Statement of the problem, Objectives of the Study, Justification of the Study, Significance of the Study, and Scope and delimitation of the Study. In chapter two, related literature on the study were reviewed along with exhibition catalogues and newspapers reports on Oladesu. Since 1999 to date, Oladesu has adapted butterfly motif in

his paintings, deduced philosophical concepts which he captioned dualism, and participated in several solo and group exhibitions. In chapter three of this study, the various methods used in this research were stated. These are historical, analytical and descriptive approaches, while in chapter four, analysis and discussions of Oladesu's paintings were made to realize the stated objectives. Twenty (20) works were selected to cover a ten year period, from 1997-2007. The works discussed are basically painting genres.

Conclusion

The major styles that Oladesu uses in executing his paintings are realism, expressionism, impressionism and abstraction. His style of painting as it relates to subject matter he paints is Dualism. In this style, the artist sees the two sides of events in works he produced from 1998-2007. While the style associated with his application of colours is Dot-linearism. This is observed in his use of specks and thin lines which he embellishes across the surface of a finished painting. It was observed that he used a style in some works, and in some others he combined at least two styles. His works being studied are solely oil on canvas, because they are the major medium with which he works. The artist's application of colours is with loose brush strokes, thinly and thickly applied on the canvas to create smooth and rough textures. Most of the paintings are executed with cool and warm colours which he adapted from the colours on butterfly wings. The use of bright colours characterized most of Oladesu's

paintings. Identifiable qualities, among others in his paintings, are the application of skillfully arranged colourful dots, thin and colourful brushstrokes that are straight on the surface of a completed work.

Sources of Oladesu's inspiration are the environment, culture, education, personal philosophy and his associates. However, a notable source of his inspiration within the environment is the butterfly motif, which he adapted for producing figure paintings, landscapes, butterfly concepts and drawing. It was observed that the artist used the specs, nobs, antenna and colours on the butterfly wings to create his art works. His mood serves as another source of inspiration for him, whether happy or sad sometimes determines the concepts he paints. The flapping of the butterfly wings gave an insight to two sides of issues in life, which Oladesu captioned "dualism".

Adaptation of butterfly motif in paintings is a visual exploration and application that Oladesu associates with his works since 1999. It is distinctive and identifiable to see Oladesu's paintings which are permeated with adapted features from the butterfly. The wavy lines which characterize Oladesu's paintings are derived from the way butterflies fly and the direction they fly. Hence, he is unique and peculiar in his style of painting.

The researcher discovered that the artist was vigorously committed to producing works that are thought provoking, which eventually will bring hope, joy, love and relaxation among others to people. Such paintings, he said, are relevant in therapeutic healing for patients, friends and relations of patients,

medical practitioners and others who come to the hospital environment as well as the society at large. Furthermore, the researcher also observed that Oladesu's paintings have aesthetic value in the society. He has contributed to the development of visual expression, through the use of an innovative motif from the butterfly, thereby not restricting himself to copying others.

It was also discovered that, Oladesu produced his first painting in 1986. It was a realistic painting of his elder brother. He has been painting since then and now targets the sick, with optimism that, his paintings can soothe ailing folks, especially through the adaptation of butterfly motif. This explains why Oladesu executes his works the way he does, in addition to the choice of themes from the environment on issues of societal relevance. The artist is greatly influenced by the environment, considering the fact that butterfly is in the environment and his themes as well as concepts are describing, presenting and representing the realities of life within the environment. Oladesu's artworks are in turn relevant to the society, in view of the fact that, those who appreciate his paintings and those that buy paintings from him are within the environment. It suffices to state that the use of the butterfly, its motifs and also his therapeutic approach to paintings make his works unique.

Recommendations

In view of the research findings on Oladesu Johnson's style in modern Nigerian art, the insight to the philosophy guiding the selection of his themes on

environmental issues, and the application of everyday happenings to his paintings, the following recommendations are advanced.

Artworks made by Oladesu Johnson, which are emphasizing the need for change in certain areas of public and private life, should be brought to relevant authority, Non Governmental Organisations whose goals are to champion such a course, so that they are reproduced in form of mural and mosaic in places of national interest.

The researcher restricted the analysis of Oladesu's works to oil paintings. Oladesu Johnson produced paintings in mural, mosaic, water colour, and collage as well as in other media which may interest future researchers. Therefore, it is recommended that studies should be carried out to examine any or all these medium. This research is limited to works the artist produced from 1997-2007, hence it is also recommended that studies should be made on works produced after the period of this research.

Notes

1. Mount (1973)
The author explains what modern art in Nigeria is, in view of changes that took place from the traditional practices to modern art practice.
2. Barnes (2006)
Barnes highlighted the works produced by individual artists when he discussed what Art is and the distinctive features of style
3. Egonwa (1991:170-172)
Egonwa explains the personalities in contemporary African Art and their stylistic tendencies
4. Egonwa (1991:171-172)
The author notes the different styles used by artists in modern Nigerian art.
5. Cernuschi (2006)
Cernuschi observed the practice, trend and materials used by artists to execute art works.
6. Vishny(2006) and Cernuschi (2006)
Both authors stressed the innovation introduced into paintings in 20th Century art.
7. Cernuschi (2006)
He comments on the changes that take place in the art works of modern Artists.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE ARTIST

1. When did you produce your first painting?
2. How many paintings do you produce on the average each year?
3. What are the major styles you use for your paintings?
4. Does your material determine the styles you use or your styles determine the materials you use?
5. Have you been consistent with the style you use in painting?
6. Do you combine styles in a painting or you always use a style for each work?
7. Can you affirm that your style of painting peculiar to you?
8. What is unique in your style of painting?
9. What are the distinctive and identifiable visual qualities that mark your paintings?
10. Please explain how dynamic you were with your style of painting before your Master of Fine Arts (MFA) research, and after?
11. What are the major sources of your inspiration?
12. What are the purposes for which you produce paintings?
13. What are the types of paintings you produce?
14. What are the multiple materials or media you use for your paintings?
15. How relevant are your paintings to the society?
16. What are the major influences on your choice of subject matter?
17. What influence does the environment have on your paintings?
18. How did you develop your style of painting?

19. Mention your place of birth below.

20. Where do you produce your paintings?