

A FUSION OF *OLELE* DANCE FORMS IN PAINTING

By

ODUFU USMAN

**DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

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A FUSION OF *OLELE* DANCE FORMS IN PAINTING

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**ODUFU USMAN
MFA/ENV-DESIGN/01944/2008-08**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMADU BELLO
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AWARD OF MASTERS OF FINE ARTS DEGREE IN PAINTING**

**DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.**

DECEMBER, 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in the project report entitled “A Fusion of *Olele* dance forms in Painting” is an original research work done by me in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria under the supervision of Prof. Jerry Buhari and Assoc. Prof. Mu’azu Mohammed Sani. The information derived from the review of literature and related works has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this project report/thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

Odufu Usman

Date_____

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this project titled “A fusion of *Olele* dance forms in Painting” by Odufu Usman, as fulfilling the requirement for the award of the Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Prof. Jerry Buhari
(Chairman, Supervisory Committee)

Date

Assoc. Prof. Mu’azu Mohammed Sani
(Member, Supervisory Committee)

Date

Dr. Best Ochigbo
External Supervisor

Date

Dr. Kefas Danjuma
(Head of Department)

Date

Prof. Joshua Adebayo Abiodun
(Dean Post-graduate School)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty Jehovah, but for whom it would have been mission impossible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude goes to the following personalities, who inspite of their tight schedule made out time to read my drafts and counselled me positively to make this academic foray a reality. First of all, I like to appreciate my supervisors, Prof. Jerry Buhari and Assoc. Prof. Mu'azu Mohammed Sani for their efforts in making the whole process a success. My thanks also go to other lecturers in the department who contributed by advising me on the way forward. They are: Dr. Kefas Danjuma, Dr. Philip Gushem, Prof. Jari Jacob, Dr. Gambo Duniya, Mr. Aliyu, Mr. Lasisi, Dr. (Mrs.) R.A. Nkom to mention but a few. I also thank the two Librarians in the Departmental Library, Mallam Shaibu Adamu and Mallam Bala Mohammed for providing me with materials.

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ABSTRACT

“A fusion of *Olele* dance forms in painting”

BY

ODUFU USMAN
(NCE ABU, B.A FINE ARTS, ABU)

The research was experimentally done to make an exposition of Olele dance by translating Olele rhythmic dance movements into forms in painting. The inspiration taken from Olele dance, an aspect of Igala ethnic culture enabled the researcher to create illusion of Olele dance movements within the forms. The problem of the study was to make an exposition of the Olele dance in a painterly form. Literature and works that were relevant to this study were reviewed and the methodology was studio based. The data which consisted of photographs and sketches were transformed into paintings under two main stages, exploratory and developmental stages. The developmental stage was further divided into partial fusion and total fusion based on set objectives. The study revealed that motion can be created on the picture plane by the arrangement of compositional elements. It also revealed that the dissolution of forms performing the Olele dance brought about a new vista of expression. It was recommended that government should re-introduce indigenous cultural dance in school curriculum to stimulate creativity in students.

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TRANSLATION OF TERMS

The word “Igala” refers not only to the people but also to the language of the people. According to Ijoma (2004), the language “Igala” belongs to the Kwa sub family of the Niger Congo linguistic family. He went further to state, using glottochronology that Igala separated from the Yoruba about 2000 years ago and about 4000 years ago from the Idomas who are next door neighbours.

Some of the Igala words used in this study were translated into English language for a better understanding, and not necessarily definitions.

Agbaka:	Name given to a particular masquerade and its dance.
Ata-nw’ojo:	Any dance that is performed all night long during occasions.
Id’olele:	Dance resulting from the response to Olele music.
Ido – wa:	Any particular dance taking place at that point in time meaning our dance.
Ishabada:	A dance that I dictated by the sound of the talking drum.
Iya:	Means play and can be used for dance.
Iya Ogu:	War dance
Iya Oye:	A dance performed to bid one farewell.
Ogba:	A vigorous dance usually performed during funerals by young boys.
Okelegwu:	A drum used by skilled drummers to dictate the pace of a dance, it is otherwise known as the talking drum.
Olele:	Name given to a style of music and dance that evolved from Igala folklore.
Ukpoku:	Special masquerades used to maintain law and orderliness during occasions.
Otogbo:	A big flowing gown worn by men.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The history of artistic renderings of the human forms goes back as long as human beings have existed. According to Gardner (1980), from the earliest Paleolithic cave paintings at Lascaux, about 32,000 years ago, to the Minoan ‘Bull – leaping’ Fresco from the great palace of Knossos, the human form has always been a subject of artistic enlightenment. These early paintings were mostly depictions of animals and hunters. The human forms were predominantly curvilinear, but showed movement with innovative means, such as superimposing or overlapping legs or juxtaposing a succession of multiple drawings to evoke a feeling of motion.

Dance, according to Collier Encyclopedia (1968) is ‘rhythmic and expressive body movement, usually coordinated into pattern with adopted musical accompaniment’. Green (1990), is however of the opinion that “African dance which is based on spoken language, is a source of communication through which it is possible to demonstrate emotions, sentiments, beliefs and other reactions through movement.

The Igala people occupy the area of land to the South of the lower reaches of the Benue and the east of the Niger rivers at about the confluence of these two great rivers of Nigeria – an area of about 8,000 square kilometers (Miachi, 2012).

These two main rivers thus form natural boundaries to Igala land on the west and north respectively. To the east is Idoma land and south, live the northern Igbo of Nsukka. The northern fringe of Igala land, bounded by the Benue River is occupied by non-Igala speaking people, namely the Basa Komo, Bassa-Nge and Ebira Koto.

The Igala word “Iya” which means play is at times used to refer to music. It is a generic term for any activity that entertains. The Olele dance fall into this category.

The 20th century ushered in painters who expressed themselves through impressionistic approach. One of such artists was Edgar Degas (1834 – 1917), who according to Schenkel (2004) is regarded as one of the founders of impressionism. He is specially known with the subject of the dance. He spent his entire career studying the rhythmic figure in the form of drawing and painting dancers. Half of his works are said to display his mastery in the depiction of movement, and is clearly the key figure in understanding representation of the human form in motion. Some Nigerian painters who experimented with rhythmic movement of forms in painting are recent and belong to the contemporary class. One of such artists, according to Fosu (1986) is Ben Enwonwu, who used a combination of abstraction and realism in showing the dance movement.

Contemporary Nigerian artists have various ways of arousing awareness of and preserving Nigerian cultural heritage. This has been done by either recreating Nigeria’s past in paintings, sculpture and drawings or by drawing inspirations from certain aspects of their cultural environment.

According to Fosu (ibid), Ben Enwonwu was inspired by culture to produce the sculpture piece ‘Sango’. Yusuf Grillo, inspired by happenings in cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria as manifested in his painting titled ‘Mother and Child’. Erhabor Emokpae was influenced by historical events which manifested in its painting titled ‘Queen Amina’. Uche Okeke and Obiora Udechukwu, influenced by Igbo folk tales used the Ulli lines for expression, which led to the production of the works titled ‘Ojadili’ and ‘Right on Brother’ respectively.

Danjuma (2010) states that Gani Odutokun was influenced by his early life in Zaria, which led to the production of paintings like ‘Samaru back street. Likewise, Jerry Buhari’s early paintings took inspirations from aspects of Gwari culture. An example is ‘Gwari form No. 3’. In like manner, the *Olele* dance presents an elaborate subject for studies in painting.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Wangboje (1982) is of the opinion that “the ultimate goal of education offered through arts is cultural identity”. Culture is the sum total of a people’s ways of life and dance is one of the projectors of a people’s culture. As there is no known artistic documentation of the Olele dance, the problem of the research was therefore, to make an exposition of the Olele dance in a painterly form as a projector of Igala culture.

1.3 Aim of the study

The research aim at exploring the rich aesthetic possibilities in *Olele* dance forms to open up new vistas in painting.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The research will explore the possibility of translating *Olele* dance movements into forms in painting to create rhythmic pictorial images. It will involve fusion brought about by an interplay of colours, lines and space in a spontaneous and free approach.

The objectives therefore are:

- i. To create pictorial images by translating *Olele* rhythmic dance movements into forms in painting.

- ii. To create illusion of *Olele* dance movements within the forms.
- iii. To show that images in motion can be reinterpreted in *Olele* dance using colours, lines and space in painting.

1.5 Research questions

- i. Is there a possibility of creating pictorial images by transforming *Olele* dance into paintings?
- ii. Would the fusion of *Olele* forms result into illusion in painting?
- iii. Can moving images be reduced to colours, lines and space in painting?

1.6 Significance of the study

- i. This research exposes the uniqueness and beauty of *Olele* dance as an aspect of Igala culture in painterly form.
- ii. The painting style that emanated from the experiment of fusion of *Olele* forms can be adopted as a new painting style.

1.7 Justification of the study

The researcher is not aware of any documentation of the *Olele* dance where the focus was to do a fusion of forms into colours, lines and space. This study therefore exposes the beauty of the *Olele* dance, to show how the rhythmic movement can be painterly translated to give it a new form of visual appreciation.

1.8 Scope of the Study

Amidst the many cultural dances like Agbaka, Ogba, Iya Ogu, Iya Oye, Ishabada, to mention but a few in Igala land, the researcher focused on the *Olele* dance as performed in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi state.

1.9 Conceptual framework

The 20th century, according to Gardner (1980), saw the emergence of art movements like impressionism, fauvism, cubism among others. It was a period of great experimentation and discovery. The impressionists expressed themselves through the use of colours to show the effect of light on objects and to suggest rather than show exact details. The fauvists too, used colours in a non realistic way, while the cubists introduced the idea of painting an object from more than one view point using geometric expression. These experiments showed that colour, line, form, texture and structure could be the ‘subject’ of the painting.

According to Schenkel (ibid), one of the 20th century impressionist painters was Edgar Degas who is regarded as one of the founders of the movement. He is mostly known with the subject of the dance. Most of his works are in that direction, and he showed his mastery of the depiction of the rhythmic figure in his painting of dancers.

While Degas specialized in painting ballet dancers, the researcher, using *Olele* dance as a guide did a fusion of *Olele* dance forms so that images on the picture plane were reduced to colours and lines to give the illusion of rhythmic movement akin to impressionistic style.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND WORKS

2.1 Introduction

The Olele dance is a contemporary social dance of the Igala ethnic group of Kogi state located in North central Nigeria. According to Okwoli (1973), the Igala ethnic group is the most populous in the state and occupy the entire eastern part of the confluence of the river Niger and Benue.



Figure I
Dancers Performing the *Olele* dance
Source: Researcher's collection

It entails pulsating intermittent swinging of the backsides and twisting of the body from the waist upwards. The dancers move in deliberate rhythmic fashion in response to the Okelegwu.



Figure II
Dancers Performing the *Olele* dance
Source: Researcher's collection

Baba (2009) observes that Olele, which started as folklore stories told young maidens by their mothes after supper, evolved from generation to generation into music and dance and made popular today by groups led by musicians like Nana Edibo, Kaka Odogomu, Ijene, Latini Yahaya, Eke Emele and so on. It is performed all over Igala land mainly for the purpose of entertainment during ceremonies. It is similar in functions with the Juju music and dance of the Yoruba speaking areas of the state and south western Nigeria.

This review focuses on aesthetics and use of colours to portray rhythmic movement in painting. The works were however reviewed under two groups. Firstly, works that do not display dancers but express movement in its artistic use of colours, lines and space. Secondly, works that display dancers in rhythmic movement through the use of colours, lines and space. A total of thirteen works from six different artists were reviewed.

2.2 Works Without Dancers

The works reviewed in this category do not display dancers. The use of the compositional elements to show rhythmic movement is relevant in the quest to transform Olele dance forms in painting. The artistic display of colours, lines and space express movement.

2.2.1 Figure III “Blue Nude” by Cesar Legaspi



Artist:	Cesar Legaspi
Title:	Blue Nude
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	Unknown,
Year:	1982
Source:	Exhibit from the collection of the Philippine Center, New York

Though this painting is not about dance, it tried to capture the form in a continuous rhythmic way in what can be described as an optical movement. In optical movement, the eye is forced to move round the picture dynamically in order to see all the different elements. Optical movement can be enhanced by curved forms that keep the eyes moving in a circular pattern throughout the picture. The artist achieved that by the

bold blue-green curved strokes in the picture plane to create the rhythmic movement sensation.

His cubist approach was described by Endaya and Rebong (2007), in Pamana; Modernong Sinning as having “reconstituted cubism’s unfeeling, geometric ordering of figures into a social expressionism rendered by interacting forms filled with rhythmic movement;

This painting relates to the research in its exploratory stage where figures were painted in realism and movement effect achievement by using colours and lines.

2.2.2 Figure IV– “Durbar” by Oswald Uruakpa



Artist:	Oswald Uruakpa
Title:	“Durbar”
Medium:	Oil on canvas
Size:	90 x 46 cm.
Year:	2007 – 2010

This painting displays three men in perspective, adorned with heavy brush strokes in a procession. The lead figure is drumming while the other two are playing the kakaki (trumpet). The play of criss-crossing lines brings about unity of figures and space and at

the same time show rhythm. Major colours used include yellow, orange, sienna, burnt umber and white.

The painting relates to the research in that lines were used to dissolve borders and create movement.

2.2.3 Figure V– “The King, the Queen and the Republic” by Gani Odutokun



Artist: Gani Odutoku
Title: “The King the Queen and The Republic”
Medium: Oil on Canvas
Size: 112 x 100cm
Year: 1991

The use of lines to define and express movement in this painting’s rhythmic presentation relates to the interest of this research in the quest to use colours and lines to dissolve figures, thereby creating an illusion of rhythmic movement. It highlights two figures in silhouette in flight as suggested by the bold strokes, being chased by another figure in red, accentuated with lines. Movement effect was achieved through the pose of the figures and the use of lines and brush strokes to bring about the fusion of certain parts

of the figures and their clothing with the background. Details have been reduced to the barest minimum. The painting gives a viewer a feeling of movement.

2.2.4 Figure VI “The Bride” by Gani Odutokun



Artist:	Gani Odutokun
Title:	“The Bride”
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	92 x 92 cm
Year:	1991

This painting titled “The Bride” (fig. VI) was rendered in an illusionist manner showing two figures suggested by lines. The figures were painted in semi abstraction with curvilinear brush strokes uniting the figures and the space. The space round the figures does not give a realistic impression of the environment in which they are located. It however, helps to suggest movement through the use of curvilinear brush strokes and lines. Contrast was enhanced by juxtaposing the blue and red hues.

It relates to the research in its use of curvilinear lines to dissolve figures and to re-create them.

2.2.5 Figure VII– “Durbar” by Mu’azu Mohammed Sani

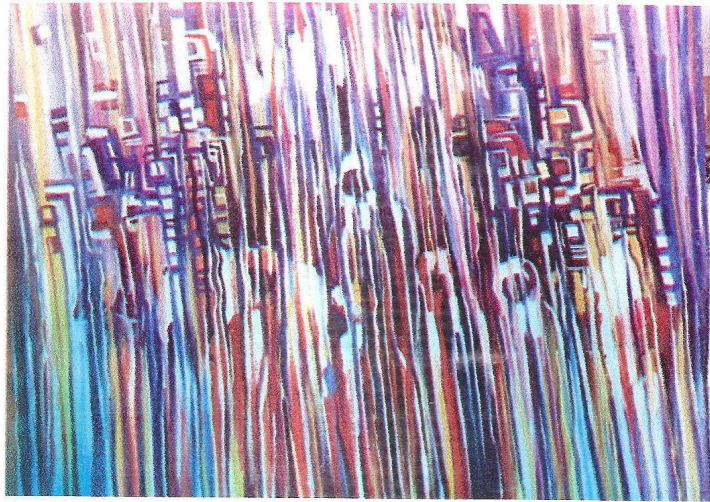


Artist: Mu’azu Mohammed Sani
Title: “Durbar”
Medium: Enamel
Size: Unknown
Year: 1992

In this painting titled “Durbar” (fig. VII), the artists achieved rhythm through spontaneous drops of colours all over the composition. The forms and space were united through the droplets of colours. Darker colours were dropped to show distinction between the figures on horse backs and the background. Rhythmic movement was achieved through repetition of colours by dropping them skillfully to show the semi-abstract riders in motion.

It relates to the research in that it displays a fusion of forms and space but differ in style.

2.2.6 Figure VIII - “Emir’s Procession” by Philip Obed Gushem



Artist: Philip Obed Gushem
Title: “Emir’s Procession”
Medium: Oil on canvas
Size: 204 x 78 cm.
Year: 1995

“Emir’s Procession” (fig VIII) is a depiction of an Emir and his entourage on an official outing. Figures appear veiled because of the vertical lines used. Forms were represented in outlines with colours like red, yellow ochre, blue, magenta and white. Fusion of forms and space was achieved by the use of vertical lines to dissolve the forms.

It relates to the research as the forms were dissolved into the background like the research but differ in style of expression.

2.2.7 Fig. IX - “Durbar Charge” by Philip Obed Gushem



Artist:	Philip Obed Gushem
Title:	“Durbar Charge”
Medium:	Oil on canvas
Size:	86 x 60 cm.
Year:	2005

This painting titled “Durbar charge” (fig IX), is a realistic rendition of horse riders charging towards the foreground. The foreground is dominated by yellow with patches of red and green while the sky is painted in ultramarine blue with white cloudy impression. The figures are treated in impressionistic manner. The theme of the Durbar race was achieved by the artist through showing the horses in action by lifting their feet from the ground as it appears in nature. The figures are in perspective as the rider at the foreground is in more detail appearance than the others behind.

This painting has common characteristics with the research in its exploratory stage. Figures were presented as natural as possible through impressionistic style. The painting portrayed kinetic movement while the research works portrayed rhythmic movement.

2.3 Works With Dancers

This category of works display dancers in rhythmic movement through the artistic use of colours, lines and space. Rhythmic movement is created on the picture plane as a result of the dancer(s) in concert and the use of the compositional elements.

2.3.1 Figure X “Morning Dance” by Cesar Legaspi



Artist:	Cesar Legaspi
Title:	Morning Dance
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	Unknown, Year:
Source:	Exhibit from the collection of the Philippine Center, New York

This painting rendered with the cubist idiom is titled “Morning Dance’ (fig X). The two figures and the background are broken into various long, flowing planes, painted in colours that complement each other and gives the viewer an impression of a flowing rhythmic movement. The individual planes do not really identify the parts of the bodies, but the artists in order not to lose the figures completely, suggested some parts of the bodies in almost realism. Such parts include the head and right leg of the man and the head, breasts and hip of the woman.

2.3.2 Figure XI “Ballerina” by Andrew Atroshenko



Artist:	Andrew Atroshenko
Title:	“Ballerina”
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	40” x 30”
Year:	2003

“Ballerina” (fig XI) was realistically painted in a way that a viewer can almost feel the movement of the costumes worn by the dancer. It was rendered in a manner that captures motion even though the body, face and limbs of the dancer were rendered in realistic form. The brush strokes portraying the dancer’s costume suggest movement. Colours like burnt umber, yellow ochre and rose madder were used to suggest a smeared background.

The painting relates to the research works as both treated dancers as subject of experiment in trying to show movement in painting. While the artist combined realism and impressionism, the research started with works in realism and ended in abstract.

2.3.3 Figure XII - “Fiery dance” by Andrew Atroshenko



Artist:	Andrew Atroshenko
Title:	“Fiery Dance”
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	36” x 24”
Year:	2000

The painting shows a ballet dancer in motion, in a blurred background. The painter achieved rhythmic movement by creating an illusion of motion through fusing the clothing of the dancer with the background. The head and limbs of the dancer were treated in realism that is, in contrast with the background.

This work relates to the research whose primary objective was to create illusion of movement through the fusion of forms in space using colours and lines.

2.3.4 Figure XIII - “Blue Rolls” by Oswald Uruakpa



Artist:	Oswald Uruakpa
Title:	“Blue Rolls”
Medium:	Oil on Canvas
Size:	91 x 61cm
Date:	2007

In this painting titled “Blue Rolls” (fig XIII), the artist used vigorous brush strokes to define the three dancing figures which were united with the background through the use of different shades of blue. Rhythm was shown by both the brush strokes defining the figures and the lines dissolving them.

The painting relates to the research through creating rhythm with the use of lines and human figures.

2.3.5 Figure XIV - “Ukwu Nwanyi Owerri” by Oswald Uruakpa



Medium: Oil on Canvas
Size: 80 x 50 cm
Year: 2011
Source: Artist's Collection

This painting titled “Ukwu Nwanyi Owerri” (fig XIV) was rendered in a fusion of realism and impressionism. Colours and lines were given prominence in the bid to create rhythmic movement. The dancing figures fuse with the background in shades of orange, red, blue and purple. Yellow was however used for highlights to show perspective.

The painting relates to the research as it used colours to bring about fusion of form and space. Lines were used to re-define certain parts of the figures to show rhythmic movement.

2.3.6 Figure XV - “Sharo dance” by Mu’azu Mohammed Sani



Medium: Enamel
Size: unknown
Year: 1991
Source: Artist's collection.

The painting titled “Sharo dance” (fig XV) relates to the research in it’s use of colours, lines and space but differ in style of expression and medium. The artist created rhythmic movement by using the splashing technique to redefine the forms of the dancers which had earlier fused with the background in the first stages. The effect of splashing tends to fuse the forms and space together. Since the colours found in the background are the same colours found on the figures. The work brings about rhythm and gives the viewer a feeling of movement.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The works examined showed that each artist has his own style of approaching the issue of rhythmic movement. It was discovered that while some used realistic figures, others used stylized figures. Yet some use colours and lines to show rhythmic movement. However, colours and lines were used to fuse certain parts of the figure to create the illusion of movement. This fusion of figures and space using colours and lines relates to the research in the quest to interpret rhythmic movement in *Olele* dance.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Adetoro (1986), “in order to gain control of a research, the investigator must examine various similar procedures and techniques used in some previous studies”. The chapter therefore describes the whole process of the research. The methodology is practical and mostly studio research. This involves going out to collect data and coming into the studio to experiment by transforming the data into paintings. The processes are discussed under the following headings:

- i. Data
- ii. Data collection
- iii. Transformation of data
- iv. Choice of medium

3.2 Data

The data for this study are photographs of dancers performing the *Olele* dance and sketches drawn from watching live performances and videos of performances.

3.3 Data Collection

The data was collected through photographs taken by a photographic camera and sketches drawn by the researcher while watching dancers performing live, and from video recordings. The sketches are drawn in a sketch pad which was taken to the studio for the painting experiments.

3.4 Transformation of Data

The data which consists of photographs and sketches of figures performing the *Olele* dance were transformed into experimental paintings under two stages. They are:

- i. Exploratory stage
- ii. Developmental stage

For the purpose of convenience, a sketch and a painting will be used to illustrate each stage of the research.

3.4.1 Exploratory Stage

This is the first stage of the research. A lot of exploration took place in the form of watching live performances of the *Olele* dance, photographing some scenes and doing some sketches of dancers. These are all done in realistic or representational form to really get acquainted with the figures which is the main data, to effect the dissolution that will bring about the fusion.

Examples are shown in figure XVI and plate I.



Fig. XVI: Idowa



Plate I: Idowa

3.4.2 Developmental Stage

The developmental stage is a further improvement on the realistic and representational studies carried out. It is further divided into two sub-stages namely partial fusion and total fusion.

3.4.2.1 Partial Fusion

In trying to bring about a fusion of forms and movement, using the visual elements of colours, lines and space, a free and a more spontaneous approach evolved at this stage. Details of features that would distract attention were eliminated. Emphasis is now on how to fuse all forms in motion into the picture plane to create rhythm. Some parts of the figures are suggested to further enhance the process of fusion. All paintings in this category lose a substantial amount of naturalism, and are partially stylized as shown in figure XVII and plate II.

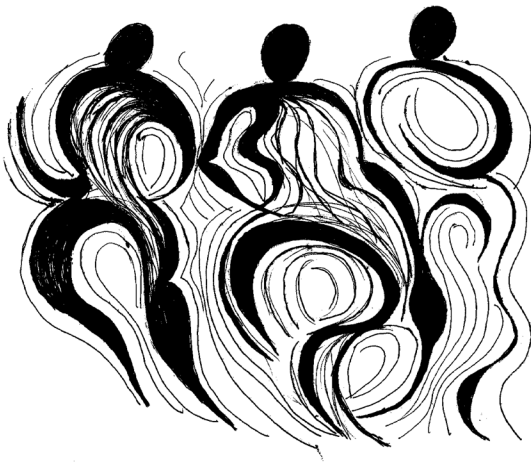


Fig. XVII: Ido-wa II



Plate II: Ido-wa II

3.4.2.2 Total Fusion

Total Fusion marks the last stage of the research. It was the culmination of all the studies carried out. Two elements of design, lines and colours, were given prominence over space at this stage. It resulted into paintings in which there is a complete fusion

whereby all forms were dissolved into rhythmic lines and colours to create illusions. Paintings in this stage are abstract and illusionistic in nature. Examples are shown in fig. XVIII and plate III.

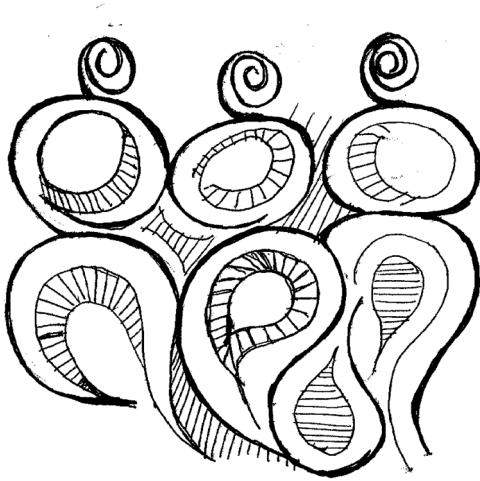


Fig. XVIII: Ido-wa III



Plate III: Ido-wa III

3.5 Choice of Medium

The main medium of expression in this research is oil on canvas, though pencil sketches were done. The oil medium was selected because of its flexibility. It is much earlier to manipulate as the whole research process is experimental and entails a lot of trial processes.

The support (Canvas) was stretched on a chassis (stretcher) with tack nails or pins. It was then primed with a primer constituting glue and emulsion paint. The priming is necessary as it prevents the oil paints from getting into contact with the surface of the canvas to prevent it from decaying and becoming bristled. Upon drying, it was smoothened by an abrasive paper (sand paper) to reduce its roughness which corrodes the bristle of the brushes used. The support which is now ready for use is mounted on an easle and the painting carried out.

Colours used in this study were solely at the discretion of the researcher, and the choice of colours was based purely on aesthetic reasons, hence natural colours were not adhered to. The use of different colour schemes brought about dynamism in the whole painting process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF WORKS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents all the research activity, in terms of studio work, that has taken place with regards to the subject matter of this project. The result of data analyzed have been categorized under exploratory and developmental stages. The exploratory stage is made up of realistic or representational paintings, while the developmental stage is further divided into partial fusion and total fusion. The works presented are discussed as plates in their respective stages.

4.2 Exploratory stage

The Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary (2004) has it that exploratory is “done with intention of examining something in order to find out more about it”. This marks the take off point of the research. A lot of studies were carried out in representational form. Representational in this context as defined by a Dictionary of Art and Artists is “Portraying recognizable objects: depicting something in a physically recognizable form especially in art”.

A total of twelve paintings are reported on in the course of the exploration. The paintings are represented as much as possible in realistic forms. No distortion of any part is made, although full detailing was not done because it was only meant to be a representation to enhance the process of the research.



Plate IV
Title: 'Ido-wa I'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

“Ido-Wa” (plate IV) was rendered in full realism. It is a direct representation of the dance. It tries to capture the three figures performing the *Olele* dance as realistically as possible. No manipulation o the figure was made. The background details were eliminated with a play of curvilinear brush strokes to give an illusion of movement.



Plate V
Title: 'Gyrations I'
Size: 120x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

Like in plate I above, “Gyrations” (Plate V) is a realistic painting done with as much natural colours as possible. The figures this time around, dance in a round, linear movement hence the title. The bright colours used shows that the dance took place around noon when colours are as natural as possible. Note that the brush work is more subtle. The emphasis is on the arrangement of the dancing figures.



Plate VI
Title: 'Ogba I'
Size: 100x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

Unlike plates I and II above, “Ogba I” (plate VI) is a diversion in the process of exploration into a dance performed mostly by male dancers. It is more vigorous in nature. However, care was taken to present it in as much natural form as possible. The colours too, are natural and the emphasis is on the arrangement and its resultant effect on movement.



Plate VII
Title: 'Stepping out I'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

‘Stepping out I’ (Plate VII) is analytical in nature. It is a deviation from true realism but it is representational in the cubist’s sense. It portrays a lone figure moving forward as a prelude to performing the “Ogba”. Rhythm was contemplated through the use of lines to break up the triangular planes and at the same time bringing about unity. The colours used are natural colours.



Plate VIII
Title: 'Id'Olele I'
Size: 100x80cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“Id'Olele I” (Plate VIII) was rendered in a representational style with very visible and aggressive brush strokes to show how vigor is employed in performing the *Olele* dance to bring out the rhythmic twist, spin and vibration to match the rhythm of the drum. The choice of colours are naturalistic in an attempt to capture the dance in its true and natural state.



Plate IX
Title 'Iya Oye'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

In the course of exploration, the painting titled “Iya Oye” (Plate IX) is slightly off the natural pedestal. In an attempt to portray rhythmic movement, bold strokes of colours were laid in curvilinear style. It has a simple compositional arrangement, while the use of bright colours suggest happiness and merry making. Colours used include shades of rose madder, pink, purple and blue.



Plate X
Title: 'The Dance'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

“The Dance” (Plate X), falls into the same category as plate IX above, with a simple compositional arrangement. The brush strokes are vigorous. This too, is an attempt to show the rhythmic movements associated with training sessions like this. A lead figure (choreographer) can be seen in the front of the ladies directing them. The colours are warm hues like red and orange to give a contrast of the viridian green used on the figures.



Plate XI
Title: 'Ukpoku'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

Masquerading forms part of the Igala culture in the area of dance, entertainment and theatre. The painting titled “Ukpoku” (Plate XI), was done as an exploratory piece to document this particular masquerades that is called Ukpoku. They are used for both entertainment and maintaining law and order during occasions or festivities.

The style is similar to that of plate IX and plate X. The colours painted are not natural and a lot of vigorous brush stokes were done to portray the restless nature of the masquerade and to show rhythm during performances.



Plate XII
Title: 'Prelude to Ogba'
Size: 100x70cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

“Prelude to Ogba” (Plate XII) is a realistic rendition of little kids performing the Ogba before the main event. It was rendered in warm colours suggesting sunset as this normally takes place around dusk. Colours used are chiefly orange, red, purple and blue. The figures are treated in realistic form with no alteration.



Plate XIII
Title: 'Ishabada'
Size: 90x70cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

'Ishabada' (Plate XIII) is a realistic painting of a drummer beating the 'Okelegu' (talking drum) and two female dancers responding actively to the rhythm of the music. Vigorous brush strokes reveal the general effect of rhythm emitting from the drum. It was rendered in normal colours which include: red, sienna, yellow and blue.



Plate XIV
Title: "The beat goes on"
Size: 91x 91cm
Medium: Enamel
Year: 2010

The painting titled "The beat goes on" (Plate XIV) is an experimentation of the splash technique. The researcher tried to see if rhythm can be created by using the technique.

The painting shows two drummers heavily adorned with the 'Otogbo' and caps to match, playing drums. Rhythm was created through the spontaneous drops of colour (enamel) on both the figures and the background.



Plate XV
Title: 'The Performers'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“The Performer” (Plate XV) is a painting of a drummer and two dancers. The composition aims at creating an illusion of rhythm and movement. This was achieved by the successive placement of the semi abstract figures on composite geometric planes. The drummer generating the music being centrally placed and flanked on both sides by the dancers. The figures can be seen to be floating with the rhythm. This effect is achieved by using composite spaces to create an illusion of backward and forward motion resulting in rhythmic formations. Soft hues of blue and red are the dominant colours.

4.3 Developmental Stage

At this stage, the research had reached the point whereby the data that was studied in realistic and representational ways would be developed a step further. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines development as “the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger etc”. This stage is further divided into two categories namely: partial fusion and total fusion.

4.3.1 Partial fusion

Studies in this category were a development from the exploratory stage which was representational. There is a free and a more spontaneous approach to the handling of form and movement. Unnecessary details of features that would distract attention were eliminated. Emphasis is now centered on how to fuse the form in motion into the picture frame to create rhythm. Unavoidably, some parts of the form are suggested to further enhance the process of fusion. All the paintings in this category lose a substantial amount of naturalism and are partially stylized.



Plate XVI
Title: 'Ido-wa II'
Size: 100x90cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“Ido-wa II” (Plate XVI) is an illusionistic painting of three figures in a rhythmic movement. It was painted in subtle blue hues with curvilinear strokes to suggest motion.

The background and forms are treated alike with some parts of the forms suggested to show the flow of the rhythm while the other parts were partially dissolve to enhance the fusion of forms and movement.



Plate XVII
Title: Gyration II'
Size: 122x92cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

In the painting titled “Gyration’ (Plate XVII), the researcher tried to dissolve most of the forms into the background with very vigorous strokes, leaving the figures in silhouettes. This resulted into wavy and curvilinear strokes to suggest an interplay of forms and motion. It was rendered mostly with hues of blue and complemented with purple.



Plate XVIII
Title: 'Ogba II'
Size: 100x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

'Ogba II' (Plate XVIII) is a stylized painting of two figures in silhouette trying to perform the Ogba dance. It is characterized with heavy and strong brush strokes as well as warm colours to portray the amount of energy injected into the performance. The colours are: yellow, orange and red, complemented with pink. The forms in silhouette are in burnt umber which brings about a total contrast in the painting.



Plate XIX
Title: 'Stepping out II'
Size: 100x80cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

In “Stepping out II” (Plate XIX), the painting depicts a blurry scene with a suggestion of some parts of the form, while most was dissolved into the background. The rhythmic brush work suggests a fusion of form and movement. The colours are almost a monochrome of blues but complemented with pink. Purple was used to create rhythm through wavy brush strokes and the suggestion of form.



Plate XX
Title: 'Id'Olele II'
Size: 120x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

The painting *Id'Olele II* (Plate XX) is a non-representational painting of three figures performing the *Olele*. The study of fusion was approached through dissolving most of the forms into flowing rhythmic brush strokes. Colours used in this painting are predominantly warm colours like red and yellow. Yellow was used for highlight, while blue and violet were used to enhance the rhythmic brush work to show movement. Certain parts of the form, particularly the limbs were lost into the background as a result of the fusion.



Plate XXI
Title: 'Ata nw-ojo'
Size: 120x120cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

The painting 'Ata nw-ojo' (Plate XXI) is a surrealistic approach to solving the problem of fusion of forms and movement. The drummer, who is the most dominant figure was portrayed in a stylized silhouette while the dancers were in representational form. The dancers appear to be merging into the drum, suggesting that the rhythm that emits from the drum determines the pace of movement. Bright hues of both cool and warm colours were juxtaposed to portray festivity. Prussian blue was used for contrast.



Plate XXII
Title: 'The magic of rhythm'
Size: 120x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“Magic of rhythm” (Plate XXII) is also in surrealism. The painting depicts two drummers, one in silhouette and the other in representational form, performing with three figures, one in silhouette and two in representational form, dancing. They appear to be dancing within flames emanating from a subtly treated blue background. The flames are in warm colours of red, orange and yellow. Rhythmic movement was achieved by the wavy but subtle brush work.



Plate XXIII
Title: 'Fiesta'
Size: 90x70cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

“Fiesta” (Plate XXIII) is an experiment with multiple figures to see how multiple figures can be arranged in their dancing position to show rhythm without dissolving most of the forms. The body of the forms were naturalistically painted in burnt umber which contrasted with the subtle pink and blue of their clothing. It is set on a soft yellow ochre background with a play of white at the bottom to suggest motion, thus reversing the law of gravity.



Plate XXIV
Title: 'The maiden's dance'
Size: 90x70cm
Medium: Enamel
Year: 2009

“The Maiden’s Dance” (Plate XXIV) is equally an experimental painting using enamel in the splash technique. It shows a figure with the upper part dissolved into the background and the lower part brought out in a stylized silhouette.

Sharp contrast was achieved with the black colour against the yellow background. An attempt of fusion was made by the dissolution of the head and arms into the background with a lighter hue of yellow. Rhythm was enhanced by the general play of yellow all over the picture plane.

4.3.2 Total Fusion

The paintings in this category was the culmination of the research. It featured paintings in which there is a complete fusion whereby all forms were dissolved into movement to create illusions. Two elements of design. Line and colour are given

prominence in this category. This results into paintings that are abstract and illusionistic in nature.



Plate XXV
Title: 'Ido-wa III'
Size: 100x90cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“Ido-Wa III” (Plate XXV) is an illusionistic painting with the brush work done in a spontaneous and free style. Fusion of form and movement was achieved through the usage of the same blue colour of the background on the form which had been reduced to mere line suggestions. The blue is of different intensity and is complemented with some shades of pink to enhance the rhythm.



Plate XXVI
Title: 'Gyration III'
Size: 100x90cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

In “Gyration III” (Plate XXVI), there is an interplay of cool and warm colours. The figures suggest vigorous brush strokes of blue, complemented with violet. The strong brush strokes gives an impression of vigorous movement. Rhythm was achieved by the balance of colours on the picture plane.



Plate XXVII
Title: 'Ogba III'
Size: 100x90cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

The painting titled 'Ogba III' (Plate XXVII) is purely illusionistic and set in a warm colour background. The two figures suggested by the use of lines are of the same intensity of red, yellow and orange. The treatment of the background and figures are the same: rhythmic brush strokes are used to suggest movement.

The use of warm colours shows the intensity of the heat generated by the Ogba which is characteristically vigorous.



Plate: XXVIII
Title: 'Stepping out III'
Year: 100x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

“Stepping out III” (Plate XXVIII) is an abstract study of a dancing figure. The fusion of form and movement was achieved through the splash of colour in all directions with a dynamic and spontaneous brush work that is so distinguished and tends to suggest the form which is already dissolved into the background, thereby creating a feeling of rhythmic movement. The painting which was made out of burnt umber, yellow ochre and green, does not suggest any form of colour perspective. Blue was introduced to give contrast and at the same time, help in suggesting the form.



Plate XXIX
Title: 'Illusions'
Size: 120x100cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2010

Like the title suggests, “Illusions” (Plate XXIX) is an abstract painting that evokes a feeling of movement. The vigorous brush strokes in burnt umber seem to create a kind of optical illusion. The shades of violet on the background complements the yellow to create a harmonious contrast with the burnt umber suggesting the figures in motion. The forms are completely fused into the background to create an impression of rhythmic movement.



Plate XXX
Title: 'Ecstasy'
Size: 80x80cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

Another dimension in the course of experimenting the fusion of forms and dance movement was carried out this way: Movement emanating from a blurry and almost smooth background.

In 'Ecstasy' (Plate XXX), the background was painted in a blurry manner without visible brush strokes. Then silhouettes of figures was accentuated by lines in light green. The lines were also used to suggest the boundaries of the dissolved forms. It gives an impression of figures floating in rhythm.



Plate XXXI
Title: 'Untitled'
Size: 91x91cm
Medium: Oil
Year: 2009

“Untitled” (plate XXXI) was rendered in the same style, but in a red background which was well complemented by shades of blue and purple. Lines were used to define the already dissolved forms which can be seen dancing rhythmically. The heads of the figures were deliberately represented in silhouettes.

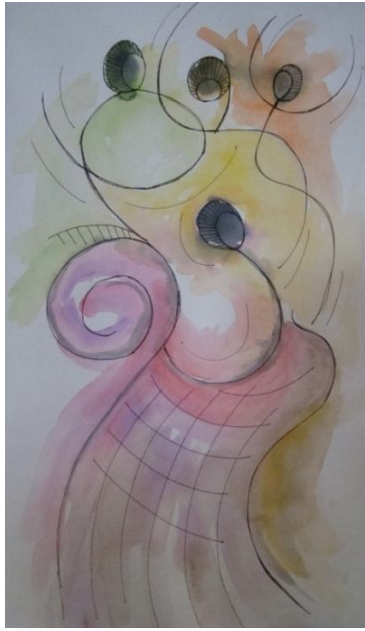


Plate XXXII
Title: 'Celebration I'
Size: 120x100cm
Medium: Water colours
Year: 2009

“Celebration I’ (Plate XXXII) is a painting done in the water colour medium. After the picture plane was washed in subtle shades of yellow, orange and red, line was introduced as the basic element used in describing the outline of form and it assumed its own significance in stylizing the picture. Rhythmic lines was also used to create an impression of movement.

The heads of the figures are also done in silhouettes.

4.4 Conclusion

Each painting was discussed under the stage at which it was produced. The interplay of the compositional elements as they affect the process of fusion of forms and space are analyzed. The use of colours to demonstrate the process of fusion to show rhythmic movement in the transformation of forms from realism to abstract are also discussed. This explains why the paintings differ as they undergo transformation from realism to abstract.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This study started with the quest to translate *Olele* dancing figures into forms that dissolve in colours, lines and space. The researcher examined the works of some masters which were relevant to his study and employed a studio experiment. Data were transformed into paintings under two main stages, exploratory and developmental stages. The Latter was further divided into partial fusion and total fusion based on the set objectives.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that through experimentation, *Olele* dancing figures can be translated from realism to forms that dissolve in colours, lines and space. The experiment resulted into the creation of a new vista of expression, and a documentation of an aspect of Igala culture in artistic expression.

5.3 Findings

- i. By arranging compositional elements in certain ways, the research was able to create movement, and force the movement of the viewer's eyes in and around the composition in the paintings.
- ii. The research revealed that forms performing the *Olele* dance could be dissolved into colours, lines and space to bring about a new vista of expression.

- iii. The researcher discovered that an illusion of rhythmic movement can be created by dissolving *Olele* dancing figures into the background and recreating them by brush work, using lines and colours.
- iv. It was discovered that inspiration taken from an indigenous culture can be documented, which may become reference materials.

5.4 Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that curriculum planners should emphasize studio practices in students as experimentations lead to discovery. Indigenous cultural dance should be re-introduced in school curriculum to stimulate creativity in students as is evident in this study.

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