# BALANCE AND STABILITY IN THE EXPLORATION OF EQUESTRIAN FORMS WITH CHARCOAL IN SCULPTURE

**BY**

**GERSHON PAUL DACHIN**
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**FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**
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**NIGERIA**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the study in the dissertation titled **"Balance and Stability in the Exploration of Equestrian Forms with Charcoal in Sculpture"** was carried out by me in the Department of Fine Arts, A.B.U, Zaria,

The information derived from literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

Dachin Gershon Paul _____ _____

Signature Date

## CERTIFICATION

This dissertation titled "**Balance and Stability in the Exploration of Equestrian Forms with Charcoal in Sculpture"** by Dachin Gershon Paul, meets the regulation governing the award of **Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in sculpture of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria** and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

_____ Date_____

Dr. Ken Okoli
Chairman, supervisory committee

_____ Date _____

Dr. Emmanuel Wesley Okachi
Member, supervisory committee

_____ Date_____

Dr. Duniya Gambo
The Head,
Department of Fine Arts,
Ahmadu Bello University

_____ Date_____

Prof. Kabir Bala
Dean, Postgraduate School

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents: Mr. and Mrs. Isa Dachinyang.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God for sustaining me throughout this programme and my parents Mr. and Mrs. Isa Dachinyang for their great support. Deepest appreciations are also due to the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Ken Okoli and Dr. Wesley Emmanuel Okachi: their professional and intellectual contributions as well as their kind patience were the sources of this dissertation's success. I greatly appreciate Dr. Philip Gushem for his kind contributions to the success of this dissertation. A special thanks also goes to Mr. Samuel Danbaba who is also a father to me, Dr. Kefas N. Danjuma, Mr. Moses Tuki and his Family, Mr. Udoka Ezealor, Prof. Augustine Ezealor, Mrs. Nkem Ezealor, Mr. Oche Paul, Mr. David Tisloh Dung, Mr. Agaku Saghevwua Amos, Mr. Mallam Bala Tanko, Mrs. Salamatu Dogara, Mallam Aminu Saliu, Mr. Yusuf Olayinka Umar, Mr. Leche Anthony, Mr. Ephraim Ogochukwu, Mr. Zumnan Sekuk, Mr. Daniel Afolayan, Dr. Talatu Adiwu, Miss Suzan Dingba, Bulus Lucy Garba, all the Fine Arts Department lecturers and everyone that contributed to the success of this dissertation.

## ABSTRACT

This study **"Balance and Stability in the exploration of Equestrian Forms with Charcoal in Sculpture"** seek to use charcoal to project solid balance and stability in equestrian forms with minimum contacts with the pedestals. The problem of the study is the weight of media and procedural challenges which have caused sculptors to use several points of contacts between the base and the forms for support and consequently restraining the dynamic actions of the equestrian forms. Therefore this study aimed at projecting a seeming delicate but permanent balance and stability of the equestrian form so as to grab hold of the natural qualities of its movements and actions. The research started by looking at the works of artists who had attempted to solve the problems of balance and stability in the equestrian form in their own ways which led to the evaluation of their works. However, the review indicates that the weights and complicacies of media like concrete, stone, bronze, metal, etc. could not allow the artists to express the forms with sufficient independence on the pedestals hence the use of charcoal to resolve the issue. The methodology used for this research was practice-led. The researcher made use of photographs of the mounted and free horses from different sources. Some of the photographs were taken at Zaria polo club while images and information from books, the internet, theses, journals, the magazines and motion pictures were also used. The instruments that were used for the collection of data included camera, pens, and sketch pads while the commercially available charcoal was used as the medium of expression. Data collected were analyzed in different stages i.e.; Representational Studies: this stage saw the production of sculptures that captured the equestrian forms in naturalistic manner. Transition Studies: sculptures from this category are a shift from the natural form into a simple dissection of some particular portions of the equestrian forms. Abstract Studies: this stage saw the production of

sculptures that grow out from the perceived reality of the equestrian forms and metamorphose into a simple imposition of charcoal forms on one another to communicate. Different sizes of individual charcoal lumps were carefully set up until the envisaged forms were attended.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The words "*equus*" and "*eques"* are Latin expressions for a horse and a knight respectively. These are the two terms from which the word "equestrian" is formed (Houghton, 2011). The term is generally used to describe an expert horse rider or any activity having to do with horseback riding, (Turnbull, 2010). On the other hand, the equestrian form is distinctively described within the sculptural field to mean a statue of a rider mounted on horse (Moore, 2011).

There is a psychological unity involved in equitation which has broadened it beyond an ordinary physically mounted horse into a devoted union between man and horse. In support of this, Blake (1975), Summerhays (1952) and Collins (2012) all together establish that harmonious association and understanding between the rider and the horse are highly essential elements of the horsemanship. Therefore, the horsemanship probably implies the general exercise of a full control over the horse including an excellent knowledge and care of the horse and the riding equipments, along with a good understanding of its physical, emotional and social behaviours.

From the outset, the equestrian components had remarkably been a creative voice through which communication with the supernatural was exchanged. This is why Janson and Kerman (1968) reveal that the cave art comprises largely of animals which were beyond the physical and also regard the pre-historic artists as ''artist-magician''. In line with this theory, Ogumor (2007) specifically identifies the artistic representations of the human figures and horses along with other animals such as camels, elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffes, antelopes and bisons as the major archeological findings of *Tassili*, Algeria in North Africa. Apart from the Pre-historic era, the equestrian form could have also been of mystical significance in the ancient Greek and Roman mythologies in which there were beings that had the integrations of human

and animal forms, viz., centaur, satyr, medusa, siren etc. These foremost characters in the ancient Greek and Roman mythological narrations were often represented with the fusions of human and animals' forms. Dember and Steven (1977) further give a suitable instance with the "Centaur" who was a Greek mythical creature mentioned frequently in the Greek mythology, he was partly man and partly horse used as a fleet-footed carrier of the gods. Centaur, the female of whom was *Centaurettes* usually bore the form of human from the head to the waist with horse's form from the withers down to the hooves. These forms were in one way or the other correlated with the equestrian forms because of the similarities in components. Thus, the connection between man, horse and art appears to be a continuous development which has been transforming with time.

Equestrianism is a venture whose origin is still debatable as different scholars have different perceptions about its inception. As stated by Levine (2013), horse domestication dates back to the end of the third millennium BC in the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Eastern Europe, Western Europe or Near East. Hirst (2013), on the other hand hints the possible earliest domestication of horse to 5000 BC in Kazakhstan and later in Mesopotamia at about 2000 BC. However, the varying concepts about the beginning of the equitation have not thwarted its significant contributions to the human civilization as the earliest effective means of land transportation as well as instrument of warfare. For this reasons, equitation is possibly the initial footprint and the ancient counterpart of the modern-day automobile and even the aeronautic devices.

The equestrian activity could be seen as a special blend of a resourceful relationship between human and the horse. This is why Clark (1977) opines that:

> Men and animals lived in harmony right from the old myths of the Golden Age, ancient Egypt and the Homeric Greece.

In the same vein, Summerhays (1952), Blake (1975), Kauffman (1978) and Daumas (1968), concurrently emphasize the cordial partnership between man and the horse which has been an

inspiring source of artistic expression since the ancient time to the present. The equestrian comradeship could also be compare with the linking power which Oche (2012), noted that:

> There is a bond that exists between persons and groups in small or large societies which results in the formation and sustenance of families, cliques, peers, community and nation.

Sher et'al (2012) further highlights the relationship between man and the *equid* by picturing how horses were mentioned by name in a motion picture. On the words of Blake (1975), Alexander the Great's closeness to his mount is shown by the fact that his horse (*Bucephalus*) is one of the first horses to be mentioned by name in history. Thus horse is a close partner to man and horsemanship surpasses an ordinary sport or recreational performance but a highly affectionate activity with in-depth intimacy between the partakers.

Apart from the visual representation of the human form seated on horse's form, the equestrian form is also a metaphoric symbol of majestic grandeur, (Held and Posner 1988). Owing to this fact, most traditional and modern sculptors have used it to elevate, commemorate and immortalized heroes as seen on "Olowe of Ise's Veranda Post", Kleiner and Mamiya (2005), the equestrian statue of "Queen Amina" and the "Durbar Horsemen" by Ben Ekanem, Banjoko (2005), Falconet's "Equestrian Statue of Peter The Great'', Francesco Mocchi's "Equestrian Statue of Alessandro Farnese'' (Held and Posner 1988). Therefore equestrian form seems to be an appropriate language of expression which most artists have found acceptable for eulogizing and the presentation of monumental commendations to icons whose lives have affected humanity in one way or the other. Consequently, Banjoko (2009) describes it as a form which best draws out a strong character and an assuring dignitary sense of a hero.

Undoubtedly, the horse had served as an instrument of combat and domination; and because of this, it is generally tagged as "the beast of oppression". Notwithstanding this, the steed's outstanding abilities have now been sensibly and positively converted into the intensification of

the quality of the sociocultural and religious aspects of human life. For example, horse riding is now a well celebrated profession of high repute and a vital tool of unique athleticism as observed in polo, horse race, dressage, obstacle jumping, bull roping etc. In some cultures, horse riding is used for the celebrations of highly esteemed festivities such as the *dubar;* a highly rated traditional festival that is annually celebrated in Northern Nigeria usually at the culmination of Muslim *Eid al-Fetr* and *Eid al-Adha*. It is the Emirate procession led by the Emir after prayers with dancers and singers, (Anon. 2013). Another significance of *dubar* is to mark holidays or the entertainment of important visiting dignitaries and the demonstration of military strength, (Adoga 2011). The *Puus Kaat* cultural festival of the *Mangu* people of Plateau State is another festival in which the equestrian activities are spectacularly displayed. Although people also mount other animals such as the camel, donkey, cow and the elephant, but the high preference for the horse is possibly prompted by its intelligence, gracefulness, strength and agility that could effectively proffer the needed solution to man in meeting his imperative engagements and traditional happenings. These characteristics have inspired some nations, states and organizations into adopting the horse solely as a component of their symbol, especially Nigeria and New Jersey in the United States of America, (Amie 2013).

Physical balance plays a vital role in sustaining the solidity and elegant posture of the equestrian form. In line with this, Gatto (1978) broadly describes balance as an optical condition that is fundamental for the unification of a composition and it is impossible to deal with the problems of form and organization without considering it. In addition to the physical balance, the equestrian form also contains the psychological balance since Hobbs' (1985) lays emphasis on the importance of equalizing the visual and psychological weights of entity in art. Therefore, the psychological balance in the equestrian forms may be playing the important role of describing

the relative significance of the basic components of the equestrianism in sculpture, viz., man and the horse, the physical balance on the other hand deals with the issues of stability and firmness.

Badaru (1990), postulates that balance is the feeling of equality in weight, attention and attraction of the various visual elements within the visual field as a means of accomplishing unity. This idea is applicable within the context of the mounted steed form due to its openness to different forms of balance in its remarkable formation. In addition to the fascinating senses of equilibrium and stability that are achieved in the equestrian form when all the visual forces of art are efficiently resolved. Reid (1964) elaborates more on balance as a process of continuous adjustment by counter balancing visual weights in a composition. While Banjoko (2009) adds that balance is the distribution of elements in art such that equal weight is given to all parts as much as visually possible. It may therefore be considered that artists have used different types of balance to achieve steadiness, harmony, excellent composition etc.

The formal (symmetrical) balance, radial balance and approximate symmetry affect the essence of equestrian form in some way. However, from Brommer and Horn (1977) as well as Gilbert and McCarter, (1988) lines of reasoning which point out the informal balance as a composition that has two unequaled sides but the impression of balance is achieved through the similarities of visual weights, informal (asymmetrical) balance can be reckoned to be the most paramount balance in the equestrian form, owing to the individual volume of the equestrian elements and its dynamic actions.

Equestrian form also requires the attention of the physical and actual stability in addition to balance for self-sustainability, strength and durability. This is because stability is an important property to architecture as well as sculpture which deals majorly with free standing forms. The vital role of stability is also observed in physics and engineering because of their dealings with

the fabrication of hovering objects in form of flying machines. The mechanism of stability is also evident in nature since the birds and the insects seem to instinctively disperse body weights properly for stability in flight. Therefore, the impression of the actual swiftness of the equestrian form would be obstructed and rendered vulnerable to the pull of gravity without the presence of physical and actual stability. Some common ways of applying stability into a free-standing piece as suggested by Leon (2015) include the kinetics, weight regulation and the choice of media, perhaps a systematic manipulation of materials could also work out stability in the equestrian form. The proper consideration of these factors in the equestrian form usually strengthens its resistance to stress, failure, and the enablement of weight and size uniformity.

Ragans (1988) observes that stable forms are motionless and static, however, stability is not actually meant to undermine or deter the vivacious actions and movements in the equestrian form since Mifflin (2011) has redressed the contention by recommending its significance in facilitating resistance to change of position, condition and gravitational mischance. Therefore, movement and action can be implied in the equestrian form while the presence of stability can serve as the factor that ensures the unchangeable permanency of the apparently delicate but firmly connecting-points of the pedestals and the equestrian forms. Adherence to the tenets of stability also aid the equestrian forms to retain their original positions.

Some exceptional qualities such as weightlessness, colour, form and texture in some media are highly influential in enhancing balance, stability and illustrating the subject matter of a form. Furthermore, there is also a fascinating beauty that always stems forth from any ingenious recreation of an identifiable or an ordinary media into an innovative form. For instance, Anon. (2014), Puts forward that:

> El Anatsui is an artist who transforms simple materials into complex assemblages that create distinctive visual impact. He uses resources typically

> discarded such as liquor bottle caps and cassava graters to create sculpture that defies categorization. His use of these materials reflects his interest in reuse, transformation, and an intrinsic desire to connect to his continent while transcending the limitations of place.

In the same way, Ndidi Dike also works in a variety of media to produce outstanding installations, paintings and sculptures. She is well-known for her three dimensional installations combining painting and sculpture, as well as for her wood sculpted totem poles and hanging wood reliefs (Tajudeen, 2011). In a similar manner, charcoal which is the byproduct of combusted wood is weightless with vibrant forms which can suggest solidity and strength, hence its utilization in this study as the medium of expression.

The dramatic, rich markings left by charcoal which appeared in the earliest primitive cave paintings of the early humans are believed to have been drawn with the charcoal created from burnt stick, (Harris 1999). As the oldest drawing medium and one of the oldest art medium, charcoal has inspired artists from the pre-historic age down to the contemporary period. But then, other than the crude burnt sticks used in the primitive era, charcoal now comes in different forms, which according to Anaekwe (2010), includes the lump charcoal, briquettes, extruded charcoal, the compressed charcoal, vine charcoal and the powdered charcoal. The diverse explorations of the charcoal in art have made it possible for the Cave Artists, Michelangelo, Albrecht Durer, Rembrandt, Degas, Matisse, Picasso, Heather Hansen etc. to expressed gestures, lines, tones, forms and different textural qualities in brilliant and appealing ways.

The type of wood and the charcoal making methods are strong determinant factors on the quality and functions of the charcoal. The amount of oxygen and heat that is applied for the combustion of the organic matter (wood) which is expected to become charcoal in the direct method of charcoal making has to be controlled in order to prevent the wood from burning into ashes, (Gill 2007). Perhaps the outcome of this process is light and softer charcoal which often

emerges in smaller pieces. Gill (2007), further buttresses the indirect method as involving the use of external heat source to heat the wood in a closed and unventilated vented chamber to bring forth a high quality charcoal that is convenient for both domestic and commercial endeavours. Gorski (2007), also states the advantages of the coniferous (softwood) charcoal in generating high quality black powder and for producing long last-lasting spark trails. Thus, the application of the indirect charcoal making process on the deciduous wood could perhaps yield a harder type of charcoal most preferred for blacksmithing, forgery and barbecuing because of its long lasting blaze and the high temperature delivery.

The valuable impact of charcoal that indisputably crosses over to other fields outside art has incited several concepts concerning it, which is why Anon. (1999), submits that the possible earliest use of charcoal as a fuel for smelting copper began over 7000 years ago. Although the above mentioned source does not specify the location of the earliest charcoal use as fuel but it provides more about the earliest indication of man's involvement with the charcoal as fuel in southern Europe and Middle East which took place in about 3,500 BC. It also happened in Egypt around 2,750 BC and thereby confirming the charcoal as one of the anchoring constituents of the early technological development.

Charcoal eating as one of the earliest forms of medication is applicable even to the animals especially the monkeys. This is because charcoal has the capacity of absorbing and deactivating the toxins contents in the Indian almond and mango which they consume, (Anon. 2009). The first recorded application of charcoal for medical purpose in the human race is said to have come from the Egyptian Papyri around 1500 BC, and the principal use appeared to be for surgical and embalming processes, (Prairie 1996). The same medical function of charcoal was later identified in Rome at 150 AD and eventually became well known for treatment in the 1800s, (Anon. 2005).

From this historical analysis, it appears that the charcoal's varied abilities have integrated art, medicine and belief to form the key subject matters of Egyptology.

The common charcoal serves as fuel and energy, but in its activated form, it exhibits antibiotic functions by the consistent lowering of cholesterol level, treatment of poison, reduction of flatulence, hangover prevention and the treatment of bile flow problems (Anon. 2014). Furthermore, Anon. (2014), observes the importance of the activated charcoal as the high absorbent material with millions of tiny pores that can capture, bind and remove gas or toxins that are up to 100 times the charcoal's weight, the toxins are specifically the ones from low quality processed food and the environmental pollution and also helps in healthy digestion. Prairie (1996), also confirms it to be an effective purifier of food and water besides its worth in the productions of glass and the gun powder. These numerous functions are conceivably the basis for which the charcoal is being regarded as an invaluable item throughout centuries.

The fast growing demand for charcoal in the international market has made the charcoal industry in Africa a vital part of the economy with suppliers barely meeting the demand in Europe, America, South Africa and Nigeria, (AbdulAzeez 2013). This has led to some unexpected results especially in Africa which were stated by Leowinata (2014) to include the impoverishment and displacement of wildlife specifically the cheetah and other big cats in the rural northern Tanzania and other Swahili villages. It is similarly observed that the spreading need for cooking fuel and other commercial needs has spark of charcoal production in some Northern and Middle Belt states of Nigeria such as Bauchi, Taraba, Gombe Nassarawa and Benue states which are endowed with natural vegetation. Although this may seems to be economically rational and worthwhile but it could also be a cause of environmental depletion and loss of nutrients; hence making the ecological system untenable for man and wildlife.

Balance is a principle of life because every animal must balance breathing in and breathing out. Similarly, the earth stays in its orbit because the pull of the sun is balance by the earth's spin, (Ragans, 1988). These concepts have inspired Seon Ghi Bahk to use charcoal to tackle the matter of balance by repurposing them to form a series of sculptural works composed across a three-dimensional space, giving the illusion of uniquely-shaped charcoal makes for an interestingly fragile sculpture with a coarse texture as seen in **Fig:** XVI below. Even as Bhak uses charcoal to tackle balance in architectural forms, the equestrian form remains notoriously difficult to render in either stone or bronze and many sculptors experience technical difficulties of balance and weight-support while creating it. Therefore, it's in this light that this study seeks to use the charcoal as a medium owing to its rough texture that can suggest the movement of forms and its weightlessness in order to achieve seemingly delicate balance and stability in the equestrian forms by minimizing their points of contacts with the pedestals.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Several sculptors like Alexander Calder, Badaru A. Kehinde, Seon Ghi Bhak, etc. have succeeded in achieving balance and stability in kinetic forms, architectural forms, geometric forms etc. But when carrying out the equestrian forms, sculptors had always encountered procedural challenges caused by the weights of the media of expression and the physical features of the horse's slim legs, though, powerfully firm enough to carry its massive upper body and the rider in reality. Until recently, these factors had instigated many sculptors into the monotonous use of a number of bulky points of contact between the equestrian forms and the pedestals to achieve balance and stability when expressing the equestrian forms. Consequently, the above restrained the lively actions of the forms applied by the sculptors who appear not to have considered stretching out the charcoal beyond its conventional function of drawing and sketching

in the two-dimensional art into sculpture to resolve the problem of balance and stability in the equestrian forms.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to produce sculptures of the equestrian forms using charcoal to achieve balance and stability, while the objectives are to:

1. Project delicate balance and stability in the equestrian forms with charcoal in sculpture.
2. Use charcoal to explore the dynamic motions and actions of the equestrian forms in sculpture.
3. Utilize the light weight of charcoal to restrain the overstressing dependence of the equestrian forms on pedestal in sculpture.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. How can charcoal be used in sculpture to project delicate balance and stability in the equestrian forms?
2. In what way can charcoal be used to explore the dynamic motions and actions of the equestrian forms in sculpture?
3. How can the light weight of charcoal be maneuver in sculpture to create balance and stability in action packed equestrian forms with restrain contacts and dependence on the understructures?

### 1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is justified through its input to the equestrian forms by employing charcoal as a medium of expression to create firmly balanced forms of the equitation with limited

dependence on the base areas. In other words this study is justified by its effort in spreading out the usefulness of charcoal as an artistic medium of expression from two-dimensional art to three-dimensional art in order to reduce the linkage of the equestrian forms to base and to encapsulate the actual elegance and liveliness of the equestrian strides and actions in sculpture.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The exploration of the possibilities of creating balance and stability in the equestrian forms with diminution of numerous contacts on base is hoped to further reduce the excessive dependability of the equestrian forms on the base for a fresh aesthetic appreciation. This is to enhance the visual relationship of the equestrian forms with the tree dimensional space. This study also hopes to be a pointer to sculptors to return to the wholesomeness and excellent serenity of nature with the purpose of exploring the relationship between man and other creatures in this age of mechanization and automation. Furthermore, the study encourages additional approaches in the use of charcoal for the creation of sculptures.

### 1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is delimited to the use of charcoal on mild steel rod armatures as the skeletal frame works to create active equestrian forms that are asymmetrically positioned on minimum points of contact to the pedestals to achieve balance and stability.

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research is based on Hobbs' (1985) findings which acknowledge that the materials with which a work of visual art is created affect its forms as much as the visual elements and principles. He also states that each material requires the artist to work in a different way and the end product always offers the viewers satisfaction from the appreciation of its form. Therefore a sculptural medium can inspires form, texture, colour and balance which always harmonize with the essence of aesthetics. In the light of these, the researcher is directed towards the exploration of the equestrian forms using the vibrant qualities of charcoal, especially texture, form and weightlessness to project a delicate balance in the equestrian forms in sculpture.

**1.9 Definitions of Special Terms**

***Bucephalus*:** the name of Alexander the Great's horse.

***Centaurettes*:** (female centaur), she was an ancient Greece's mythological creature usually portrays as half horse and half woman.

***Dogon:*** West African Niger Congo language of Mali and Burkina Faso.

***Dubar:*** the traditional and religious festivals held in most northern states of Nigeria by the Hausa and Fulani, usually characterized by horse riding, music and processions in commemoration of the *Eid-al-fetr* and *Eid al-Adha.*

***Eid al-Adha:*** ("Feast of the Sacrifice"), the Muslim religious festival that commemorates the willingness of the patriarch Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael at the command of Allah (God).

***Eid al-Fetr:*** ("Feast of fast Breaking"), the three-day Muslim religious festival that follows Ramadan, the month of fasting.

***Eques:*** the Latin word for the knight.

***Equid:*** a member of the family of animals that include horses, donkeys, and zebras.

***Equus:*** the Latin word for the horse.

***Tassili:*** the geographical location in Algeria, North Africa where some of the pre-historic artistic findings were discovered.

***Puus Kaat:*** ("Day of Gathering"), the traditional festival of the *Mwaghavul* people of the central Plateau state in Nigeria which usually features horse riding, dances, music, cultural displays etc.

***Mangu:*** a geographical location in the central Plateau state of Nigeria that is occupied majorly by the *Mwaghavul* speaking people.

**Queen *Amina:*** the 15$^{th}$ century Military ruler of the Hausa city-state of Zazzau (Zaria) city in Kaduna state, Northern Nigeria. She elevated the Zaria City to prominence through her brilliant military exploits during her reign.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study is centered on the use of charcoal to explore the equestrian forms that retain solid balance and stability while having minimum points of contact with the pedestals while this chapter deals with two major issues namely:

(a) The analysis of the equestrian forms in relationship with balance and stability

(b) Review of related works

## 2.2 The Analysis of the Equestrian Forms in Relationship with Balance and Stability

Although, a good number of artists today prefer nonfigurative art due to post modern influence, religious beliefs, individual taste and other factors but the craving and appreciation of figurative forms with the expressions of vigour, elegance and vivacity still thrive till date. This is in line with Janson and Kerman (1976), who opine that:

> The equestrian is a form that brings out elegant carriage whether executed with lightness of step in relationship to general design and striking attitude or with a more ponderous and solemn composition. This fact is clearly recognizable on Falconet's "Equestrian Monument of Peter The Great", a sculptural piece describing Falconet's radical departure from the stiff tradition of the pass, whereby most of the horse's legs were thrown down to the pedestal for balance and stability. He rejects the stately and the parade gait of the conical sculpture of Marcus Aurelius.

Falconet, however turned instead to a more dynamic baroque type with a rearing horse as did Ehizele on his "Durbar". This shows that equestrian forms could radiate the unity of motion and force better when the dynamics of action is implemented in it.

The forms of a mount and horse imply an embodiment of a powerful dominance; a principal element in depicting a great sense of authority. While buttressing the majestic sway of the equestrian form, Jason and Kerman (1976) infer that the equestrian statues had been reserved for emperors in the Roman times and the only surviving example is the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius which was a special honour in commemoration of the emperor. The Jodhpur School's highly stylized kind of equestrian portrait in profile of a ruler with his richly ornamented regalia is also a typical illustration of imperial sovereignty, (Greenwich 1974). Although, the "Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius" has an impression of a noble dignity and an asymmetric balance, but the three hooves of the horse that are connected to the broad pedestal for stability

appear to be restraining the actual swiftness of the horse which is portrayed on its facial expression.

Practical complications pertaining to balance, stability and weight, including the symbolic implications of various poses, have a strong bearing on the equestrian forms. The trot, prancing and canter are observed to be the common equestrian carriage that most sculptors embark on when portraying military or civic leaders on horses' backs. Some prominent examples include Donatello's "Equestrian Statue of Gattamelata", Andrea del Verrochio's "Equestrian Monument of Bartolommeo", Paolo Uccello's "Equestrian Monument to Sir John Hawkwood" and Baron Carlo Marochetti's "Equestrian Statue of Richard the Lionheart", (Johnson 2014). Alternatively, Ben Ekanem's "Equestrian Statue of Queen Amina", Banjoko (2009), Clark Mill's "Andrew Jackson" Robinette (1976), Etienne Maurice Falconet's "Equestrian Monument of Peter the Great" reveale that the rearing stance is applied to suggest conquest and coercion. Other equestrian forms like the "Statue of Genghish Khan Anon. (2014) and that of Bolivar, La Paz, Anon. (2013), although, still bearing some elements of heroic undertones but were presented with a calmness of an unmoving and stable attitude. The complexity of the galloping posture on the other hand entails the horse's sequential hooves' movements and series of reoccurring flying suspensions with twinkling steps. These have rendered it to be more convenient for two dimensional expressions except for some equestrian reliefs like "King Assurbanipal's Lion Hunt" and "The Hittite Rider, (Self 1952).

In Africa, the relationship between the leaders and the equestrian forms are strong, intricate and universal. Among numerous examples is the Equestrian Fly Whisk, an Igbo *Ukwu* depiction of an equestrian figure on a fly-whisk which has a formal balance. The *Dogon* equestrian figure which is imposed on top of a ritual bowl as well explains the equestrian

magnificent potency, (Leuzinger 1972). The Assyrian Art of the equestrian relief of "King Assurbanipal's Lion Hunt" otherwise known as the "Imperial" is a commemoration of the king's triumphant hunting and soldierly accomplishments, (Caleca 1988). These are important phenomena which emphasize the usefulness of the equestrian forms in visualizing the successes of crowned heads and also useful items of religious activities. To a large extent, the rigidity of the chieftain regulations and the spiritual commitments attached to the pre-twentieth century African art seemed to impel the proportional scale, stability and balance of most of its equestrian forms into a formal and static type as the four hooves of the horses are in most cases, rendered standing on the base.

## 2.3 Review of Related Works

The reviewed works are the works of the artists that either have the equestrian forms as their sources of inspirations or the charcoal as medium of expressions. Some of these works were executed in the round while some are in relief, their styles range from realism, stylization, abstraction and cubism. Their media of expressions include gold, silver, bronze, granite, concrete, gypsum, marble etc. The analyses of the works cover both African and foreign works which follow a trend of organization that comprises of the realistic equestrian sculptures, stylized equestrian sculptures and the charcoal explorations.

### Realistic Equestrian Forms

## 2.4 "Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius"

The equestrian statue in Fig I: is an important imperial portrait which signifies heroism and authority; a depiction of mounted Marcus Aurelius with his feet hanging free because stirrups were probably not common in the art of horse riding then. A similar instance is observed on "The Hittite Horseman and the "Equestrian Statue on the Tomb of the Scaligers". However,

their impact could be spotted on subsequent equestrian forms such as Donatello's "Equestrian Statue of Gattemelata" and Verrocchio's "Equestrian Monument of Bartolommoe Colleoni". Aurelius' size appears slightly bigger on the horse than the actual proportional scale of human on a horse which could be attributed to the breed of the horse or he mounts a foal rather than a full grown stallion. Although most emperors were combatant in that time but Aurelius is not depicted with any arm coupled with these is that his raised right arm expresses the gesture of greetings and kindness rather than violent. Stability and balance were achieved by positioning the two back hooves and left hoof in the front. The absence of the reins is quite a subject of mystery and might as well be a deliberate attempt aimed at provoking intellectuality, amazement and keen observation on the viewers' minds.



**Fig. I:** "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius" 176 AD. Gilded Bronze, 11'6" feet. **Unknown Artist.** Source: http://www.bluffton.edu

**2.5 "The Equestrian Statue of Condottiere Gattamelatta" (Erasmo da Narni)**.

"The Equestrian Statue of *Gattamellatta*" in Fig**.** II below is an equestrian piece by the Florentine sculptor, Donatello. *Erasmo* da *Narni*, (Gattamellatta) also called "Honeycat" was a powerful and illustrious military leader of the time. He appears to ride as though in a slow, almost intimidating, victory procession on a strong and heavy horse. Donatello seemed to pay more attention to the general forms, Renaissance individualism, humanism, classism, emotional qualities with meticulousness to details on this bronze equestrian piece which stands on marble base. Gattamelatta rides confidently as he looks straight ahead to his goal and wields the symbols of power: the baton in his hand and the giant sword at his side. The ball that supports the horse's lifted leg is a pleasing device and an ingenious invention which is better than pointless forms or box which would have hinders the forward movement that the ball adds to the composition. Apart from that, the ball also helps in ensuring stability and balance in the piece because it connects the left front hoof with the pedestal. The influence of this work can be perceived on subsequent equestrian sculptures because of its significant subject matter and the pleasing composition.



**Fig. II:** "The Equestrian Statue of Condottiere Gattamelatta (Erasmo da Narni)", 1443-1953. Bronze on marble plinth. Height: 340 Cm. **Donatello.** Source: http://www.bluffton.edu

## 2.6 "Equestrian Statue of Alessandro Farnese"

Liveliness, action and movement are the foremost qualities that Mocchi exhibited on this equestrian piece. Although Farnese is riding the horse at the pace of a canter, however, the effect of the wind on his garment, the horse's mane, the tail and the facial expression of the horse gives a feel of a galloping tempo. Mocchi counted on his inventive powers and solved the technical problems related to bronze casting, balance and stability by dropping the left hind hoof and the

right front hoof on the pedestal, thereby, bequeathing the piece a sturdy poise. While the unmistakable enactment of the horse and the mounted Farnese is a deliberate and conscious determination aimed at achieving the buoyancy and the intrepid character of the equestrian formation. The absence of stirrup could be influenced by its insufficiency in equitation during that period or perhaps, the artist or the client's discretion. The bridle style which is simple due to the nonappearance of the nose band except the cheek piece, the thick rein and the rider's floating garment are somehow similar to that of some northern Nigerian riders especially in Zaria. These are also adequate enough to prompt the impression of force and strength. The professional handiness and the creative input invested in this equestrian piece is worth the five years which took the artist in the execution of the work now situated at Pizza Cavalli, Piacenza.




**Fig. III:** "Equestrian Statue of Alessandro Farnese" 1620-25. Bronze. Height c. 6'6 **Francesco Mocchi**. Source: http:www.wga.hu/html

**2.7 "The Striding Horse"**

"The Striding Horse" in Fig: IV below appears to be in a similar posture with that of Donatello's "Equestrian Portrait of the Condottiere Gattamelata" in Padua. The statuette of the horse appears short which may be due to the stride of its step and the wide swing, or the artist modeled from a short breed. The thick rendition of the neck and the trunk also contributed to the short outlook of the horse's limbs. Although the mane is short but its curvilinear trajectory form harmonizes with that of the tail, hence creating an exciting rhythm. The differentiating treatment of the patterns on the mane and the ones above the hoofs give the horse a precious quality and a sense of palpation. Balance and stability were achieved by placing the left front hoof and the right hind hoof on the pedestal.



**Fig. IV:** "The Striding Horse" Unknown Date. Bronze, Height: 47.5 cm.
**Unknown Artist.** Source: http//www.bing.com

**2.8 "The Equestrian Monument of Peter the Great".**

The equestrian statue of Peter the Great, made for Catherine of Russia by the famous French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet (1716-1791) captures the essence of baroque style. This over life size statue balances on three supports which comprise of the two hind legs of the horse and the tail. The pedestal upon which the piece stands is a wave like granite which ideally elevates the work above eyelevel in order to allow a perfect view from all angles. The hind legs of the charging horse also match a snake which perhaps symbolizes the enemies of Peter the Great who is on the horse. This sculpture is so powerful that according to the legend attached to it, the enemy forces would never capture St. Petersburg while the "Bronze Horseman" still stood as protected which is why during the World War II the statue was protected with sand bags and wooden shelter which helped it survive and remained intact.




**Fig. V:** "Equestrian Monument of Peter the Great'' 1766-82. Bronze Statue on GraniteBase. Over Life Size. **Etienne Maurice Falconet.** Source: www.bethlyonbarnett.com

**2.9 "Statue of Queen Amina"**

Queen Amina's equestrian statue is one of the most outstanding equestrian forms in Nigeria. It is the statue of the legendary "Queen Amina" which used to be in front of the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. This is an action-packed sculptural piece which portrays the Queen and her horse in a highly dignified impulsion and ferocity. The elevated sword in the Queen's raised hand while sitting on the rearing horse is quite indicative of conquest or probably anticipation of victory. Unlike some equestrian sculptures around the country, Ekanem demonstrates a high level of anatomical conception and a good control of proportion. The ringlet effect of the horse's mane, tail and the draperies of the Queen's garment harmonize with the uneven patterns of the granite pedestal. Aside compositional intensions, the physical attachment

of the horse's tail to the stony pedestal is most likely some technical measure of strengthening the balance and stability of the piece. This work also deserves approbation because it brought to the surface the true strength, beauty and the self-esteem of this middle aged Queen.

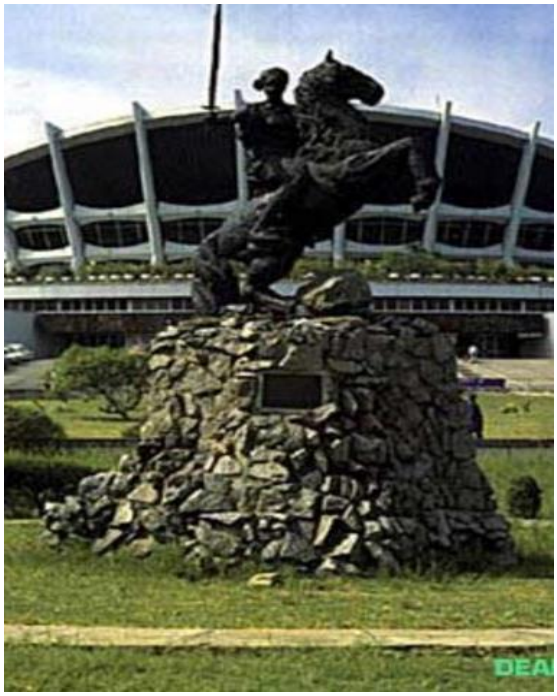


**Fig. VI:** "Statue of Queen Amina" (1980). Concrete and granite. **Ben Ekanem.**
Source:http://nyfit.tumblr.com/image

**2.10 "St. George and the Dragon"**

This is the work of Cosmas Domain Asam (1686-1750) and Egid Quirin Asam (1692-1750) a painter and sculptor who both trained in Rome and developed further the Italian baroque style. This piece, Fig VII is a good example of the fusion of sculpture, painting, architecture and decoration. This theme ("St. George and the Dragon") had been executed by several artists such as Paolo Uccello and the rest. The piece shows the artists' interpretation of the popular legend about the dragon that remains outside the city in return for eating some inhabitants. When the turn of the king's daughter comes she was rescued by St. George who slays the dragon. The

artists were able to utilize three of the horse's hoof to support the upper parts of the horse and St. George who seats on the horse.



**Fig. VII:** "St. George and the Dragon", 1721. Gold and silver-gilt stucco. 432 x 576 cm.
**Asam Brothers.** Source: www.studyblue.com

**2.11 "Standing Horse" (Photograph).**

This is a photograph of a horse taken by the researcher in February 2013 in the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, at the Main Campus. The horse is well built when compared to the sizes of Zaria horses. This horse seems to be displeased with the situation it is in, physically fit and strong but yet the reins are not long enough to allow it to roam around. And consequently, the horse is pulling the reins in an attempt to break free for some adventure. The forms and colours of the bridle, the harness and the other riding fittings on the horse's forms create an interesting

colour contrast and harmony. These grant the horse a delightful appearance even without the mounted rider.



**Fig. VIII:** "Standing Horse (Photograph)" 2013
Source: Researcher's Collections.

**Stylized Equestrian Forms**

**2.12 "The Hittite Horseman"**'

This is one of the earliest representations of a mounted horseman which dates back to about 1400 B.C., (Self 1952). The leg and the foot positions of the rider are interesting since they show that the Hittites realized the value of the depressed heel, (Self 1952). Another feature in this equestrian form is that it depicts the trend of horse riding of that age, especially the absence of the stirrups which were not introduced in the horsemanship at that stage of human development. The rough texture also adds to the aesthetic richness of the work while the shield

and spear in this stylized relief sculpture portray the rider to be either a warrior or soldier. This work may be compared with Benin "Plaque of a Horse and Rider" in terms of the divergent scaling of the two forms which are different from the actual dimensions. Perhaps physical balance and stability wouldn't have been a challenge to the artist because the sculpture is executed in a relief manner.



**Fig. IX:** "The Hittite Horse Man" 1400 BC. **Unknown Artist.** Source: www.gettyimages.com

**2.13 "Plaque with a Horse and Rider"**

The strange regalia of the rider in Fig. X below ("Plaque with a Horse and Rider") is a subject of contention. Even though similar equestrian sculptures can be found among the Benin antiquities, it was thought that he was more likely a ruler of a friendly neighbouring kingdom. It is also believed that a similar ruler is "atypical" for Benin and believes, based on his hair style, he might have come from Ife. Another plausible interpretation of this plaque from a mythological perspective suggests that it represents *Oranmiyan* from Ife, the Yoruba founder of the second dynasty since it was he who was believed to have brought horses to Benin. The incongruous attires of the supposed *Oranmiyan*, thus, emphasize his status as a foreigner in Benin. The figure might also represent the development from specific Oba to an abstract "triumphal king" (Duchateau 1994). The spear in the rider's hand could mean that he is a warrior or a hunter. While the extension of his headdress out of the background creates an informal balance and breaks the rigidity of the symmetrical square sheet of bronze at the background which is also suggesting him as member of a ruling class.



**Fig. X:** "Plaque with a Horse and Rider", 17th century. Brass. **Unknown Artist.**
Source: www.galerie-herrmann.com

**2.14 "Assyrian Art" (King Assurbanipal's Lion Hunt).**

As perceived on most other Assyrian arts of King Ashurbanipal's days, the relief sculpture in Fig: XI below seems to be a triumphant presentation of tremendous energy. The horses are excellently portrayed alongside the beautifully balanced position of the riders which portrays confidence and bravery, forward impulsion and suppleness. This piece appears to have some features in common with the Egyptian art especially the juxtaposition of the different

perspectives such as the use of the frontal eye in profiles. Nonetheless, it still retains some exclusive qualities of its own, specifically the stylization of the detail anatomy and the clearly pronounce muscles. The inspiration for this works is drawn from King Assubanipal's military and hunting achievements. The composition is set on a plain background while the spatial relationships succeed in attaining naturalistic effects on the figures which are depicted in a clash scene with a lion. Actual Stability and balance are not very essential on this piece owing to its relief feature. However there is a combination of both formal and informal balances.



**Fig. XI:** "Assyrian Art, (King Assurbanipal's Lion Hunt)" Year: (c. 645-635 B.C.E.) Gypsum Hall Relief, **Assyrian Sculptors.** Source: www.biblearchaelogy.org

**2.15 "Chinggish Khaan Statue Complex"**

This piece in Fig: XII is a great tall statue of Genghis Khan also known as *Chinggis Khaan* who was the creator of the world's largest contagious empire and as a legendary horseman, he is depicted on a horse back holding a golden rod in his hand near Ulan Bator,

Mongolia. This statue has the height of 40 metres (131 feet) standing on a 10 metre (33 feet) high pedestal which makes it the tallest and largest equestrian statue in the world. The shining, stainless steel clad statue is part of a theme park called the ChinggisKhann Statue Complex built by 'The Genco Tour Bureau', a Mongolian company and this sculptural edifice was executed in 2006. Aside the aesthetic importance of this architectural sculpture, its heroic dimension and the strategic location perhaps suit its tourist, resort and recreational importance. This is because it is situated at TsonjinBoldog, near the banks of river Tuul about 54 km from the capital town of Ulan Bator. The architectural analysis of this work reveals that it contains a recreational area, conference room, restaurant and souvenir shops located in the 36-column base of the statue and from here visitors ascend to exhibition hall using elevator at the back of the horse. The visitors can walk to the head of the horse through the chest and the back neck of the horse, from where they can have a panoramic sight of the entire complex and also the green steppes. It would be supposed that the equestrian forms could serve as a sufficient source from which ideas and inspirations for architectural layouts can be drawn.



**Fig. XII:** "Chinggish Khaan Statue complex" 2006.164 ft.
Source: http://armchairtravelogue.blogspot.com

**2.16 "Equestrian Figure on Fly-Whisk"**

Like most other pre-twentieth African equestrian sculptures, the size of the rider in Fig: XIII is overstated when compared to the horse's size. The piece depicts an equestrian figure on a fly-whisk handle. The sculpture's upper section consists of a figure seated on a horse, and the lower is an elaborately embellished handle with beaded and thread-like patterns. In addition to the exaggerated size of the rider, the amplified size of his head is in accordance to the common trait of the traditional African proportion. The pronounce facial stripes which complement the relief patterns on the horse and the motifs on the cylindrical base could also represent titled or tribal marks found among the Igbo cultures. The static postures of the horse and the rider seem to be suggesting a formal type of balance.



**Fig. XIII:** "Equestrian Figure on Fly-Whisk" 9th to 10th Century CE. Copper Alloy Bronze. 63/16" Height. **Igbo-ukwu Artist(s).** Source: Kleiner (2011).

### 2.17 "Horse and Jockey"

The artist maneuver solid forms and void to create stylize horse riders on fast moving horses which may be supposed to be race horses because of the impressions of the helmets worn by the riders and their stooping sitting positions. The Middle East timeless love and devotion for the equitation as a religious and social mandates are probably the inspirational influences for this work. The serrated outlook of the forms is an inventive technique of achieving the dynamic

effect of informal balance and to conceal the obvious look of the bronze in order to stir suspense on the viewers' minds and to suggest movement.



**Fig. XIV:** "Horse and Jockey" N.D. Bronze. Over life-size. **Unknown Artist.**
Source: Farsi (1991).

**Charcoal Explorations**

**2.18 "Emptied Gesture"**

Heather Hansen is a New Orleans-based artist who really puts herself into her work. In her project, "Emptied Gesture", she creates something exceptional. This work under review, just like most of her other works, is the incorporation of performing art, sculpture and painting. Hansen used her entire body, feet and hands to create this larger than life size kinetic drawing with charcoal which result into some concentric patterns with the qualities of radial balance,

linear and tonal variance on a large canvas in the presence of live viewers. The primary objective of this creative practice seem to be the unification of the three most basic art genres, that is, painting, sculpture and performing arts in order to deliver both aesthetics and some astounding moments, giving the viewers a good sense of the moment, intensity and performance. The components of the finished artwork include the artist herself as part of the creation and presentation.

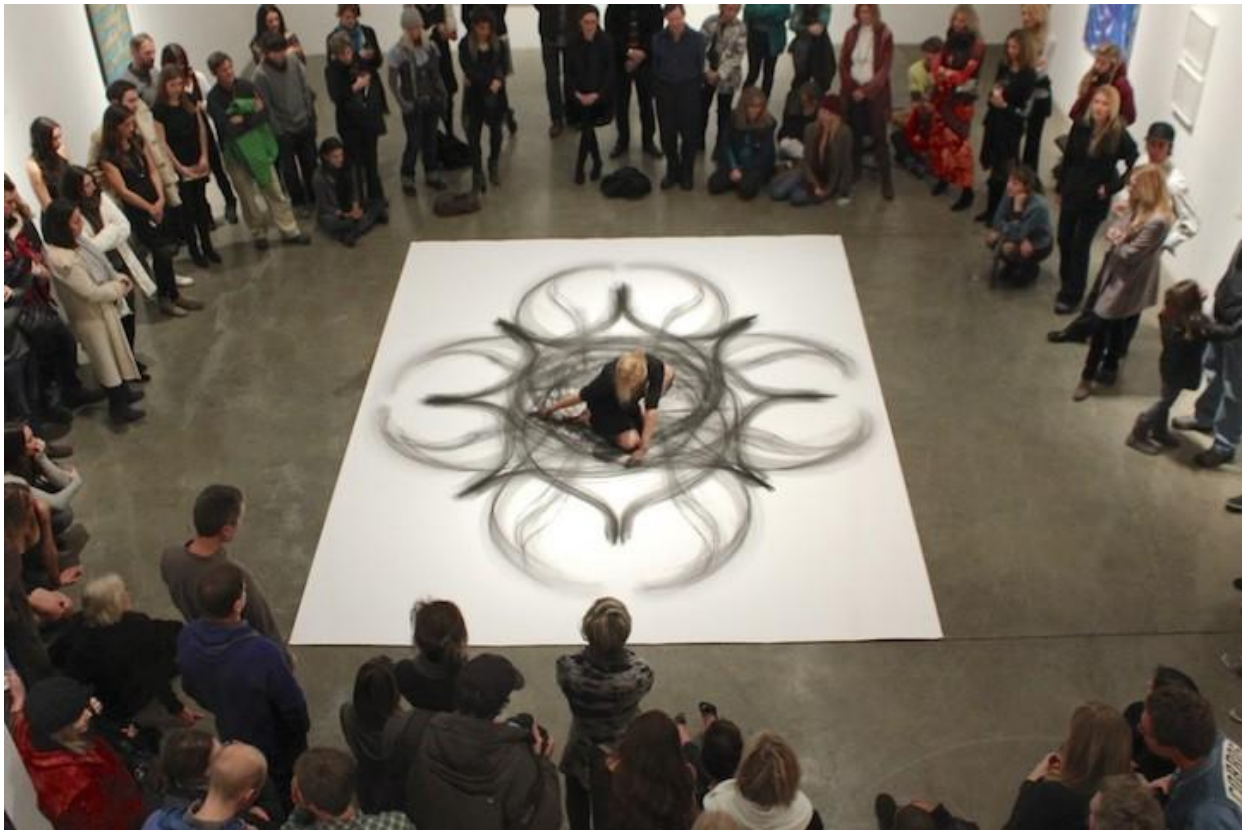


**Fig. XV:** "Emptied Gesture" Charcoal on Canvas. **Heather Hansen.**
Source: http://www.distractify.netdna-cdn.com

**2.19** "**Cascading Flower Vase"**

This is an intrinsically fascinating approach of changing the common into an uncommon in an overwhelming style. Bahk have used this technique to create new aesthetic possibilities by using charcoal to introduce a relationship between man-made goods and their sources. On this

flower vase, Bahk totally and meticulously swung large groups of charcoal at specific heights to collectively resound this structural and building constituent. Bahk achieved this incredible feat by using translucent nylon thread to hang individual pieces of charcoal to give each installation a floating quality. The charcoal is an improved replacement for other large and heavy materials like stones and so on. Even amidst the technical arrangements that encircles the work, the influence of nature still exists in it as a result of the representation of some natural elements in sculpture, especially the suspended condition of the universe. Bahk further attempts in this flower vase and his other works the withdrawal from the usual tradition of placing forms on pedestal but rather devised an overhead means for balance and stability.



**Fig. XVI:** "Cascading Flower Vase" Charcoal and Translucent nylon Thread **Seon Ghi Bhak.** Source: www.mymodernmet.com

## 2.20 Conclusion

From the lists of the reviewed works which were executed in various media, it is observed that the equestrian form is essentially a mounted horse form that usually substantiates either cavalry, imperial, heroic integrity and grandeur. Falconet's "Equestrian Monument of Peter the Great", Ben Ekanem's "Statue of Queen Amina", Francesco Mocchi's "Equestrian Statue of Alessandro Farnese", "The Statue of Marcus Aurelius", the Benin's "Plaque with a Rider", Donatello's "Equestrian Statue of Gattameleta" "King Assurbanipal's Lion Hunt" Asam Brother's "St. George and the Dragon", "The Hittite Rider" and "Horse and Jockey" are related to this study especially in terms of exploration, inspiration, compositions, the credible and precise connections with the equestrian forms. While Seon Ghi Bahk's "Cascading Flower Vase" and Heather Hansen's "Empty Gesture" are also related to this study in terms of medium (charcoal). The artists as well, ingeniously composed the equestrian forms while others used the charcoal in order to achieve their aims but none of them channeled the use of the charcoal towards the creation of stable and action-packed equestrian sculptures with diminutive connections with the pedestals.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the methods used in the research. The researcher employs a studio practice-led methodology, which is based on continuous encounter by means of visual contact with the subject. Studio practice led research, according to Gray and Malins (2004), is an attempt to unite theory, practice, thought and action into a framework for inquiry. Thus, the researcher spent time observing and examining mounted as well as free horses' forms and making studies that served as preliminary sketches for the purpose of this study. The sketches were used in the studio to produce the sculptural works. Charcoal is selected as the medium of expression while the vinyl tile adhesive and fibreglass resin were mixed with the charcoal dust and used as binding agents in all the stages of the studio explorations. The armature were not require in the transition stage but pieces of 8 mm mild steel rods were interlinked between the charcoal pieces in order to assist the binding agents in holding the charcoal lumps together. In the abstract studies, fewer pieces of big charcoal were superimposed on one another using the same procedure with the transition studies.

## 3.2 Instruments of Data collection

The instruments used for the collection of data for the purpose of this study are as follows:

a) Camera: A digital camera was used in photographing different views of the poses and actions of the mounted and free horses. These snapshots were used as the reference materials.

b) A4 Sketch pads: These sketch pads were used for the drawings of the mounted and free horses.

c) Internet: important information and reference images were also sourced from the computer through the internet

### 3.3 Data Collection

This study used both primary and secondary sources for data collection. The primary sources of data were the direct observations of the mounted and free horses at the Zaria polo club during matches and trainings. The secondary sources of data were obtained through the careful observations and direct studies from books, magazines, newspapers, photographs, theses and the internet. The charcoal's light-weight, imperishability, uniqueness, the natural matt black plus the suggestive forms rendered it ideal material for the exploration. While the mixture of the charcoal dust with the vinyl tile adhesive and the fibreglass resin remain the binding agents.





















*Images from primary source of data.*

### 3.4 Data Analysis

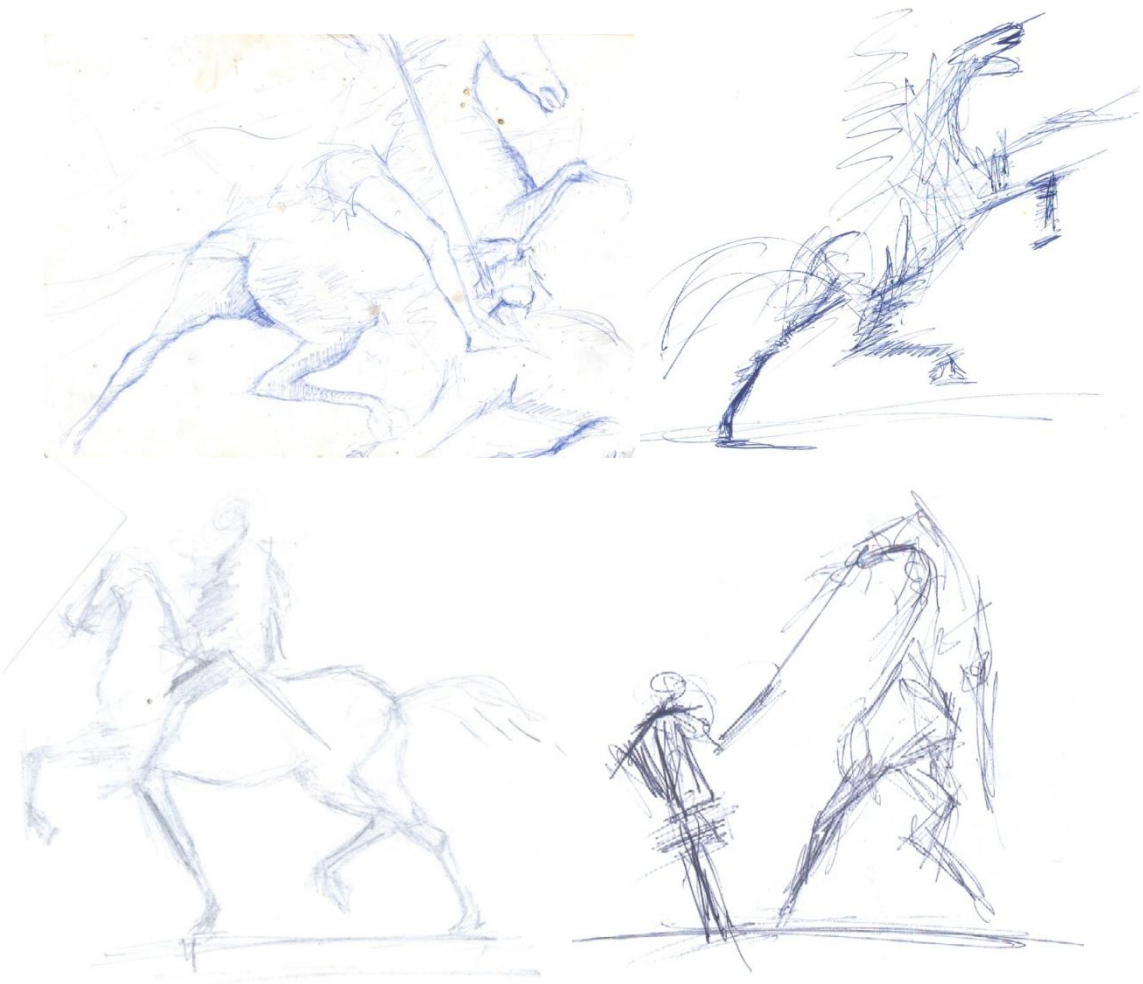
Series of illustrations of some of the equestrian forms obtained from the Zaria Polo Club, books, magazines, photographs and the internet were organized and composed to create the equestrian sculptures that sustain balance and stability on minimum contacts with the pedestals. The researcher made drawings of the equestrian form in varied postures, which led to the production and categorization of the sculptures into three major groups, namely the representational, transition and the abstract studies.











*Preliminary sketches.*

### 3.5 Procedure

The procedure adopted was an assembling process of the individual charcoal lumps and pieces of different sizes and structures that fit the planned forms. The modeling and casting approach were implemented in the second preliminary studio exploratory stage of the study. Representational sketches and drawings of the equestrian images were initially done, followed by the constructions of the armature.

Armature Constructions: The skeletal frameworks for the representational studies were constructed with the 12 mm mild steel iron rods. The mild steel rods were measured, cut, bent and welded according to the scale of the mounted horses in the galloping, cantering and the charging poses. Each of the armatures was made with a single point of connection with its pedestal by means of doubling the 12 mm mild steel rods for firmness and solidity. The connecting points between the equestrian forms and the pedestals for the works in the galloping and the cantering posture were the front hooves while the ones for the forms in the charging pose is the back hoof and the spear of a horse rider.

Preparation of the Binding Agents: Different types of binding agents such as the super glue, white glue, multipurpose adhesive and multiband gold were experimented on the charcoal. These binders however could not bring forth the needed results because they were not meant for the charcoal surface. While in the course of the examination, vinyl tile adhesive and fibreglass resin were eventually ascertained to be the favourable binding agents due to their quick and strong setting capabilities in addition to their efficacy in bonding the charcoal lumps together. But before assembling the individual charcoal pieces on the constructed armatures with the vinyl tile adhesive and fibreglass resin, charcoal dust was initially prepared by grinding and pounding of the charcoal lumps into a powdery substance. The charcoal powder was mixed with the fibreglass resin and the vinyl tile adhesive. The charcoal powder mixture with the fibreglass resin was used as the binder for the initial outlining of the forms at the early stage of the assemblage. The vinyl tile adhesive mixture with the charcoal powder was used for the final stage of the modeling because of its slow setting nature, which gave room for detailing and finishing.

### 3.6 Preliminary Studio Exploration

The preliminary studio exploration was carried out on casting with the charcoal powder. A horse's head was first modeled in clay and the moulds taken in Plaster of Paris (POP), which were opened after setting. The opened moulds were cleaned up after which the separators were applied, i.e. matching stain and petroleum jelly. The charcoal powder was mixed with the vinyl tile adhesive and applied into the moulds and allowed to set. A layer of denim fabric material pieces mixed with the vinyl tile adhesive was laid over the first charcoal powder layer; a practice similar to the traditional placement of fibre mat layer on the resin layer for reinforcement. This was followed by the separation of the POP mould from the cast work in charcoal, then the coupling with the 8 mm mild steel rods plus the same charcoal powder and the vinyl tile adhesive. The work was mounted on an iron pedestal followed by the coating with the dilution of vinyl tile adhesive and water.

Although the outcome of this experiment, which is shown below in Plates Ia. and Ib. yielded an effective result, however, the charcoal's peculiar forms are not noticeable and there is no visible and clear-cut difference between the finding and the synthetic fibreglass resin and concrete castings which have been practiced for years. Therefore, the researcher took up the assembling approach for the study because it wouldn't alter the natural uniqueness of the charcoal form.



**Plate Ia.** The Studio Exploration's Finding (Side View).



**Plate Ib.** (Front View).

**Process and Procedure**

### 3.7 Representational studies of the Equestrian Forms

This stage marks the commencement of the practical studio work for this research. Several drawings of the equestrian forms were made from the various collections of the images from the primary and secondary sources. These drawings were transformed into the representational equestrian sculptures of about quarter life sizes with the charcoal lumps. Armatures for the works were made in the galloping, cantering, trod and charging actions as explained above. The armatures for each of the works were made in such a way that they possess the impressions of forceful actions with seemingly delicate and single hoof-to-pedestal connections. The armatures were tactically solid enough to ensure balance and stability. Each of the hoofs that connect a work to its pedestals was made with a pair of 12 mm. mild steel rods which were strategically rooted and firmly welded into the base areas, followed by underlay of flat woods. Individual charcoal pieces of different sizes were sequentially bond to the armatures with the charcoal powder mixture and the fibreglass resin in the early stage of the modeling while the same charcoal powder mixture with the vinyl tile adhesive was used for detailing and finishing until the envisioned forms were attained.

### 3.8 Transition Studies of the Equestrian Forms

Individual charcoal lumps with cylindrical forms were used at this stage to create stylized equestrian forms with minimized contacts with the base areas. The armature was excluded at this point because of the big sizes and few numbers of the charcoal pieces required at this stage. However, balance and stability with unity were accomplished by drilling holes on the charcoal pieces to accommodate the 8 mm. mild steel rod that were meant for the reinforcement. The steps followed go thus:

Step 1: selection of suitable charcoal pieces for the intended forms.

Step 2: strategic drilling of holes on the selected charcoal pieces.

Step 3: pouring of the fibreglass resin and charcoal powder blend into the drilled holes.

Step 4: gauging of the pieces of mild steel rods into the drilled holes: the metals rods were twice the length of the holes so that each pair of a corresponding holes on two charcoal lumps to be joined could be occupied by one piece of mild steel rod to hold them together.

Step 5: the pieces of mild steel rods were implanted into the resin-filled holes on the charcoal pieces, then interlocking and tying them, after which the fibre glass resin was allowed to set.

Step 6: the ropes were loosened followed by the alignment of the forms according to the intended composition and welding them to the metal sheet pedestals.

### 3.9 Abstract Studies of the Equestrian Forms

The works in this stage are abstraction of the equestrian forms. The charcoal lumps with forms that are not having obvious nearness to the real forms of the equestrian were used. The procedures of this stage were also similar to those in the second stage except that the works stand on charcoal pedestals.

### 3.10 Finishing

In order to enhance the presentation as well as to prevent smudging, all the works were coated with a dilution of vinyl tile adhesive and water so as to serve as a fixative.

### 3.11 Limitation

The impediment experienced in this study is the charcoal's negative response to most of the easy-to-control and simpler kinds of binding agents like the super glue, white glue, multipurpose

adhesive, multiband gold and evo-stick except the fibreglass resin and the vinyl tile adhesive which their complexities prolonged the studio explorations.

### 3.12 Summary

The research design used for this study is a studio practice-led methodology and the method used in the execution of this study was through observation of the mounted and free horses' forms, which led to the production of sketches and the studio works. Data were collected through the primary and secondary sources. Primary source of data collection consisted mainly of observation of the mounted and free horses, which led to the production of sketches. While the secondary source of data collection comprised of the analyses of the equestrian images from different sources such as the internet, books, etc. Data collected were analyzed and grouped into three major categories, viz., the representational, transition and abstract studies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# CATALOGUE AND ANALYSES OF WORKS

## 4.1 Introduction

At the end of the studio exploration of this research, a total of twelve works were produced and catalogued in this chapter. The mounted and free equines served as the sources of inspiration for the works which were grouped into three categories; the representational, transition, and abstract studies using the charcoal as the medium of expression. Charcoal assemblage and direct modeling techniques were applied in the explorations while the blend of charcoal dust with the vinyl tile adhesive and the fibreglass resin were used as the binding agents. Below is the catalogue and analyses of the works as executed within the studio.

**4.2 Representational Stage**: At this stage, the researcher's interest was in capturing a near exact description and the representation of the natural appearance and disposition of the equestrian forms. Details of the equestrian forms in different actions were portrayed in this category with the charcoal.

## 4.3 "Sword Play"

This is one of the works produced at the initial stage of the study. Although the rider in Plates II a. and II b. is depicted holding a spear rather than a sword, but holding the spear in this context also signifies a gallant display of courage and warfare skills in a severely heated battle situation just as holding a sword. The conscious suspicion of the fatal deathtrap of the enemy's attack from the rear causes him to abruptly interrupt the steed's forward movement by a sudden jerk of the reins as he turns back to encounter the opposing force. This reckless but necessary act triggered the horse into unexpected pains and as a result, it raises its head up just to ease the ache. Even in pains, the horse still maintains a proper balance and stability by assuming its own

weight, that of the rider and his spear on its right hind leg. The left leg that is stretched out in the air together with the stretched right and the folded left hooves in front are still parts of the reflex instincts of easing the discomfort. The rider is however less mindful of all these except thrusting his spear back to the foe in readiness for the encounter.



**Plate II a. Title:** "Sword Play". (Side view). **Height:** 170 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal**. Year: 2014**



**Plate II b.** (Front view).

**4.4 "The Raid"**

The piece in Plates III a. and III b. is an expression of a high point of forceful action with a display of an engrossing dynamics and raw power. The work also echoes the climax of a pivotal clash between a horseman and an unidentified adversary. The active motions of the horse and the rider indicate their alertness and the understanding of having an enemy in common, hence, the need to act as an indivisible unit for victory. The rider does not only powerfully thrusts down his thick spear into the imagined foe but had to count on his warfare skills which go along with raiding experience to perceptively avoid the horse's leg by just a slightest brush and still hitting the targeted opponent who is almost out of his view. He was able to strike the enemy by slanting his weapon; this action also influences the entire composition into a diagonal kind. The horse's bent-neck and the oblique spear upon which the entire forms stand are the crucial elements that present life to the work.



**Plate III a. Title:** "The Raid". (front view) **Height:** 133 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate III b.** (Side view).

**4.5 "Confrontation"**

The fastest pace of a horse and most other four-legged animals is the galloping pace. In the case of the horse galloping, it is observed that there is a considerable involvement of energetic and mechanical work at vibrations of high frequencies while the muscles in the legs serve as dampers and providers of sufficient sprightliness and vigour. The horse in Plates IV a. and IV b. is galloping headlong in confrontation towards the right target as instructed by the horseman who rides observantly focus. The action in this piece is abundantly dispensed on the horse than the rider because of the impression of the steed's wafting mane, tail and the delicate connection of the edge of the horse's right front hoof and the pedestal.



**Plate IV a. Title:** "Confrontation". (Side view). **Height:** 40 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014



**Plate IV b.** (Front view).

**4.6 "Accusation"**

The rider in Plates V a. and V b. is boldly making an accusation sign by pointing an accusing finger towards an imaginary accused. The horse attention is also on the victim even though it canters towards a different direction because the horseman's outstretched arm points to the accused. Even without any weapon, the extension of the hand suggests dictatorial dominance and intimidation of an individual.



**Plate V a. Title:** "Accusation". (side view). **Height:** 42 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014



**Plate V b.** (front view).

**4.7 Transition Stage:** Studies from this category are a slight switch from the representational studies; the works in this stage are purposeful intermediate between the representational and the abstract studies. These involve a dissection of the equestrian forms and a shift from precise detailing of the whole forms into segmentations of some selected portions.

**4.8 "Headway"**

The "Headway": Plates VI a. and VI b. is a depiction of a striding mount with the rider displayed in a stylized manner. Charcoal pieces with tubular forms were juxtaposed into a simple abstraction of an equestrian form riding at a canter. Just like the gallop, trod and prancing, cantering stride is equivalently captivating as it is the intermediate pace between the galloping and trod which involves a smooth and easy movement with at least a hoof contact with the ground at a time. The stride of a mounted horse in most cases is determined by the rider and in this case, the rider decides to move his horse at a moderate speed. The single cylindrical-shaped charcoal imposed vertical on the horizontal ones represents the upright seating posture of the rider while the six other pieces of the same shape were composed to suggest the cantering steed.



**Plate VI a. Title:** "The Headway". (front view) **Height:** 68 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate VI b.** (side view)

**4.9 "The Banquet"**

This work in Plates VII a. and VII b. is among the works in the second stage of the exploration and it has its inspiration from the horse's habit of consistent grazing when on cessation. In order to replenish the used energy in running and other tasks, the horse usually grazes on the pasture. In this exploration, a section of the equestrian form is stylized and simplified using the horse's muzzle as the point that connects the entire form to the base. Even though the left front hoof also touches the pedestal but it interacts harmoniously with the rest of the components while resting independently from them.



**Plate VII b. Title:** "The Banquet". (Side view). **Height:** 48 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014



**Plate VII b.** (Front view)

**4.10 "Vigilance"**

The horse is watchfully alert of its surrounding despite the fact that it always put its head to the ground to eat the grass. This particular work shown in Plates: VIII a. and VIII b. is inspired by the acuteness and the incisive senses especially the eyes of the horse which can see different directions at the same time, coupled with the sensitive senses of smell and the auditory. The actual flexibility of the horse's neck is also reflected on the horse's neck bend which turns so that the eyes can spot the invading prowler. Charcoal of different sizes where used to represent the frontal part of the horse, which comprise of the head, neck, half trunk and the right front leg that connects the base with the other parts of the work.



**Plate VIII a. Title:** "Vigilance". (Side view). **Height:** 84 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate VIII b.** (Front view).

**4.11 "The Emissary"**

The emissary is the king's messenger or representative. The king's word is his instrument of authority and as such it is an inseparable part of his sovereignty which needs to be obeyed. The words of authority often bear the manifestation and dominion of the possessor. His majesty may not have to go out into the community in person and express himself but this role is usually assigned to the emissary who conveys the king's wishes to any length on the horse's back. This piece of sculpture in Plates IX a. and IX b. therefore, emphasizes the power and significance of words and speech in both the traditional and the modern societies. Although the modern society dispenses information through electronic and other contemporary means which is more timely, on the other hand, the traditional approach was also uniformly structured in that an individual in person of an emissary or a town crier could spreads the message within the community and beyond within a short period of time. This is the last study in the second stage, and as such, happens to mark the completion of the transition studies and the precession to the abstract studies. It is represented by charcoal pieces that signify the rider on a charging horse.



**Plate IX a. Title:** "The Emissary". (Side view). **Height:** 48 cm. **Medium:** charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate IX b. (Front view).**

**4.12 Abstract Stage:** The studies in this category have a very little reference to the perceived reality of the equestrian forms but still embrace the full contents of its subject matter. The forms were advanced, altered and simplified into the imposition of charcoal lumps on top of one another to form abstract equestrian forms.

**4.13 "Sidesaddle"**

Sidesaddle is the women's riding saddle which is designed in such a way that the rider sits with both legs on the same side of the horse. The sidesaddle is different from the conventional English saddle in that a hook-like pommel supports the rider's right leg draped over against the horse's left side while the left leg is held in a conventional stirrup. The rider carries a whip in her right hand since she cannot influence the horse with her right leg. Thus, the flat lumps were jointed side by side to suggest the distinctive feature of the sidesaddle which shows that the equitation also accords a due esteem to the feminine gender.



**Plate X a. Title:** "Sidesaddle". (Side view). **Height:** 43 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate X b.** (Front view).

**4.14 "The Cavalry Soldier"**

A cavalry soldier is a mounted soldier trained to fight on horseback, as distinguished from other marshal ranks. Although the cavalry has been replaced by modern firearms such as tanks, amoured cars, helicopters etc., but perhaps, the ancient civilizations, especially the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Macedonians, Mongolians, Gothic, Romans etc. must have employed the used of the cavalry troops for their speed and mobility to explored, raided, pursued, harassed, subdued and conquered their enemies. Therefore, the sculptural piece in Plates XI a. and XI b. draws its inspiration from the formidable and striking responsibility of the horsemanship in the ancient regimental enterprise. The charcoal lump at the top is the representation of the rider even as the ones in the center and bottom stand for the horse and the base respectively.



**Plate XI a. Title:** "The Cavalry Soldier". (Side view). **Height:** 43 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2015.



**Plate XI b.** (Back View).

**4.15 "The Horseman"**

Sometimes, the horse can be so ambivalent that it takes a veteran horseman to understand him because he can be easy and difficult which distinct him from many other animals. Therefore the horseman must have a real understanding of the horse and must also make it a responsibility to get to the bottom of the horse's mind. The horse is always fond of conveying to us his powerful abilities to the utmost point but in most cases, he rarely expresses his weakness which requires the horseman to finds out for himself by a gentle tenderness. The charcoal piece that is imposed on the two bigger ones in Plates XII a. and XII b. represents the horseman while the two bigger ones represent the horse which maintains a balance and stability with a slight touch with the base.



**Plate XII a. Title:** "The Horseman". (Side view). **Height:** 51 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal.

**Year:** 2014.



**Plate XII b.** (Front view).

**4.16 "Affinity"**

In the traditional African society, there is always a spontaneous and natural liking for a close relative especially the one base on blood or common origin. At times this kinship coexistence springs up some forms of discrimination and nepotism in the society, but there is no doubt that the kinship relatedness fosters a sense of identity, affection and corporation which is similar to that of the horse and the rider. The equestrian bond and affinity is represented on the piece in Plates XIII a. and XIII b. by the pieces of the two slanted long charcoal composed together to express the profound link and the affiliation that exist between the horse and its master as well as within the kinsfolk in the society. While the other pieces at the bottom are the pedestal.



**Plate XIII a. Title:** "Affinity". (Side view). **Height:** 50 cm. **Medium:** Charcoal. **Year:** 2014.



**Plate XIII b.** (Front view).

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Summary

This study aimed at the possibilities of creating balance in the equestrian form while reducing the points of contacts between the forms and the pedestals in order to enhance the movement and actions of the equestrian form for a better aesthetic appeal. This goal was achieved through the utilization of the charcoal and its vibrant qualities. During the course of the study, all the twelve works produced were catalogued and analyzed. The works ranged from representational, stylized to abstract equestrian sculptures with charcoal.

## 5.2 Findings

Charcoal was used in this study to create equestrian forms that contain delicate but firm balance and stability on minimal contacts with the base areas. The research also found out that charcoal could be used to create equestrian forms with dynamic motions and actions. This study has found out that charcoal's light weight makes it an appropriate option for heavy media like stone, metal, bronze and concrete when it comes to the issue of curbing the overstressing dependence of the equestrian forms on pedestals in sculpture devoid of vulnerability to the effect of gravity. It was also realized that binding agents like the multipurpose adhesive, multiband gold, super glue etc. don't work on the charcoal surface effectively like the fibreglass resin and the vinyl tile adhesive

## 5.3 Recommendations

The diverse artistic explorations from the prehistoric era down to the present time and this study inclusive have not exhausted the artistic possibilities and the abundant potentials of the charcoal. Therefore, artists and sculptors are encouraged to explore the charcoal in diverse ways

such as charcoal carving and installation in order to address issues in art. Experiments could also be carried out by a systematic incineration of the wood carving into charcoal sculpture. It is recommended that further studies on the relationship between the human forms and other forms in nature especially other living and nonliving creatures be carried out with the charcoal as these could open up more aesthetic possibilities.

### 5.4 Conclusion

The study in the efforts of minimizing the contacts between the equestrian forms and the pedestal shows that the reduction of dependence of equestrian figure on the base could highlight the natural feature of the equestrian actions. Therefore, any attempt aimed at curtailing the overdependence of the equestrian forms on the understructures could introduce a dynamic relationship between the forms, base and the three-dimensional space.

### 5.5 Contributions to Knowledge

1. This study has enriched the spectacular representation of the natural qualities of the equestrian disposition and movement as well as enhancing its visual relationship with the three-dimensional space.
2. This study has helped to resolve the problem of weight and balance usually associated with active and dynamic equestrian forms.

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