EXPLORATION OF SNAKE MOTIFS IN PAINTING

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA NIGERIA. IN FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF FINE ART (MFA) DEGREE IN PAINTING

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ZARIA

MAY, 2019

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled "**An Exploration of snake motifs in Painting ''** has been written by me and that it is a product of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous publication for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and sources of information are acknowledged by means of reference.

Dasok Yohanna Amos _____ _____

Signature Date

Certification

This dissertation titled "**An Exploration of snake motifs in Painting''** by Dasok Yohanna Amos, has been read and approved for meeting the requirements for the award of Master of Fine Art (MFA) degree in painting, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to God Almighty for His mercies and compassion from start to finish of this programme.

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Abstract

This project is an experimental research which seeks to create a body of paintings by exploring the surface quality of lives and forms apparent on eight snake patterns. The designs and patterns on the snake are a source of inspiration for creating diverse art works. This research discovers unique ways of exploring and interpreting motifs from snakes in abstract rendition and providing conceptual painting compositions using the patterns and line formations. The researcher employs a studio based methodology for this study whereby the independent variable is subjected to a creative manipulation. This experiment proves that snakes often feared by man could be harnessed for art production. The researcher finds out that the snake patterns offers opportunity for artists to adapt various visual artistic qualities for artistic expression. The spiral lines, the geometrical shapes, brilliant colours, the smooth and rough texture are the major sources of inspiration in this research. It is observed that snakes have not been explored to a large extent and adapted by Nigerian artists for painting experiences. Lines was manipulated to cause change and to remove the scene of representation in realistic form. In the same vein, some of the works are conceptual looking less complicated while geometric interpretation of the subject matter is exhibited. Artists in general, are inspired either by nature or their own environment or fellow artists, in their creation of art works. This research, therefore, draws the attention of Nigerian contemporary painters to explore more on nature for visual art expression with an in depth studying of snakes as it relates to the elements of art and design. The critical studio analysis and exploration of the snake hopefully ignites a new direction and understanding to visual artist to look at nature with creative minds to enable them create art works using snake as a source of inspiration in painting.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria is known for its diverse landscapes and climatic conditions, including rainforest, coastal plains, mangroves and vast savannah. These account for Nigeria's wide biodiversity of flora and fauna, including abundant species of snakes. It is observed by Goin and Goin in Kearny (2003) that the subject of reptiles is one of the most fascinating to be found in the study of natural history. This is partly due to the fact that, particularly with snakes, there is always an element of danger when dealing with them. On the other hand, man is always naturally curious about things which he instinctively fears.

It is noted by Durand (2004) that snakes are members of the class of animals known as reptiles (reptalia), and are further divided into the order squamata and are in the sub order of serpents. Snakes are characterised by great elongation of the body accompanied in most cases (except in the primitive type such as the python, boas and worm snakes) by complete absence of limbs and associated elongation of the internal organs, with great reduction or lost of one of the lungs (right lungs), in conformity with the elongation of the body.

The post-cranial skeleton is reduced to a back bone and ribs, with the great increase in the number of vertebra of ribs to give increased flexibility of body movement. Snakes are also characterised by a loose attachment of ribs to the vertebra, allowing great distinction of the body for the encompassing and swallowing of preys considerably greater in diameter than the head or body. The brain is completely bony in front; with absence of an internal air and a functional auditory apparatus. The eyes are without moveable eyelids, are but covered by a transparent spectacles, which is shed regularly with rest of the skin. The tongue elongates, is slender deeply forked, and is also retractile in to a sheath lying in the floor of

the mouth and protrusible. The tooth are sharply pointed, curved and fused to the supporting bones and in certain species, some specialized to function as poisonous fangs. The body of snakes are entirely covered with scales or scutes of various shapes and sizes, known as snake skin as a whole. Scales protect the body of the snake aids it in locomotion, and allows moisture to be retained within the body. The scales also alter the surface characteristics such as roughness to aid in camouflage, and in some cases, even aid in prey capture. The simple or complex colouration pattern on the scales of snakes are a property of underlying skin. A herpetologist, Krysko (2016) of Florida Museum of Natural History, says that some coloured patterns are identified in snakes as follows:

a. Uniform colours; these are solid colours of black, brown, tan, orange, yellow, grey, blue or green.
b. Speckles are small coloured marks or spots on a scale of different colours, thus often covered or flecked with small marks or colours.
c. Stripes; these are narrow lines that run lengthwise down the snakes body.
d. Spots, these are small rounded marks, usually without border which may cover several scales.
e. Cross bands: these are bands of colours extending across the sack and down the sides excluding the belly.
f. Blotches: are large irregular shaped markings frequently with dark borders.
g. Diamonds: Slightly overlapping diamond shaped blotches running down the middle of the back which usually have dark borders or light and dark borders.
h. Rings: There are bands of colours that extend across the back down the sides and across the belly to completely encircle the body.

Visual artist over the years have the innate varied creative and intellectual urge to express themselves in diverse ways. Most painters drew their inspiration from nature, dream,

music, and hunch or from socio political scenes, religious and man-made objects. Nature has been one of the major sources of inspiration for artistic expression. Therefore, it offers verse artistic subject matter for explorative, analytical and developmental study of art forms which may convey the artist's creative ingenuity. Gardener (1980) observes that, from prehistoric times to date, man has been much involved with nature and its elements such as visual forms, shapes, patterns and images, which are traceable to the visual expression on cave walls of Altamira and Lascaux. Exploration on symbols, motifs, design and structure by various artists were developed into modern art movements such as: uli motifs of the Igbo in Nigeria, Ona motifs of the Yoruba, Nsibidi of the South and the Hausa Northern Knot of Northern Nigeria. Studies have shown that reknown painters such as Picasso (1973) was influenced by African female figures. Sekuk (2015) also explored the surface quality of frogs. Oladesu (2002) mentioned that Rugsch was fun of painting different flowers, trees, tree trunks and animals like snakes, lizards and snails. Notably, Artists have been inspired by different themes and subjects globally.

The patterns and colour of Snakes have been a motif in human culture and religion and an object of dread and fascination all over the world Krysco (2015). The vivid pattern of snake scales such as the Gabon viper; both repel and fascinate the human mind. Such patterns have inspired dreads and awe in humans from pre-historic times and these can be seen in the art prevalent in those times. Snakes scales also appear to have affected Islamic arts in the form of tessellated mosaic patterns, which show great similarities to snakes scale patterns. The snake scale was portrayed as a clue in the 1982 blade runners. Besides, snakes also feature in popular fiction such as ''Harry potter'', Mayuri (2010) explains that the Chinese and Japanese make snake tattoo designs on their bodies (arms, legs, chest and back). The tattoos are carried in different colours with bold and aggressive lines that have toothed edges.

Snake tattoos are flexible and versatile in nature. Cobras, pythons and rattle snakes are some of the designs used in tattooing. Snake tattoos can be combined with other tattoo designs like skull tattoo to make the best gangster tattoo that portrays the evil and the dark side of the underworld. Thus, we can say that there are a myriad meanings associated with a snake tattoo and the way the tattoo is painted gives the meaning of the tattoo. However, it should be noted that this research is concerned with the problems of how the motifs and colour patterns of the snake can be adopted in paintings.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Art works created using motifs drawn from snake are dominant in Europe and Asia. They are depicted in photography, illustration, prints and installations. There seems to be no artist attention in painting anything related to snake motifs, especially in Nigeria. However, having search through relevant available literature, it was observed that no study has been done to the knowledge of the researcher in this regard on the use of motifs from snakes as an academic research in painting. On a consistent whole, this research work sets out to explore a painting using motifs derived from patterns found on a select species of snake.

1.3 Justification of the Study

It is observed that efforts have been made by some artists in the recent past towards adapting some aspects of nature as a source of inspiration for painting. Among them are Talatu (2013) who researched on ‘’spider web’’. Okanlawon (2013) explored the “Ona Motifs’’ while Chafe (2000) researched on a selected decorative motifs used for Durbar related objects for painting. Also, the researcher is not aware of artists who have taken interest in this direction as an academic work. Therefore, this study justifies the exploration of motifs derived from snakes as a source of inspiration in painting.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to produce a body of paintings using motifs derived from the body of snakes.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this research are to;

i. develop a form of expression that draws exclusively from the lines derived from snake patterns.
ii. conceptualise the motif derived from snakes patterns into paintings
iii. use motifs derived from texture of snakes to create painting

1.6 Research Questions

i. In what ways could a form of expression be developed that draw exclusively from the exploitation of snake patterns?
ii. What are the possibilities that snake motifs can be conceptualized into painting?
iii. How can motifs derived from texture of snakes be used to create paintings?

1.7 Scope of the Study

Among over three thousand (3000) species of snakes, Reeder (2015). The researcher has selected about seven (7) species based on the peculiarity of their patterns and their availability within the Zaria and environ of Northern Nigeria. Some snake species, which inhabits this area include the following; Bitis gabonica, Bitis arietans, Black necked spitting cobra, carpet viper, Ball python, Rattle snake, Green snake. The researcher intend to produce about thirty works (painting). The sizes range between 50 centimetres,60 centimetres, 80 centimetres , 100centimetres, 120centimetres and 140 centimetre.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is hinged on the “Op art” of Bridget Riley, which goes beyond most of the abstract arts of the past in that it uses simple forms for the purpose of visual

stimulation. It is also achieved through the systematic manipulation of shapes and colours. Sylvan (2000), advocates that the paintings of Riley is known for melding clean lines, colour arrangements and geometric precision. The researcher adopted the idea and the technique used by the aforementioned artist to undertake the study. The technique include the juxtaposition of forms, colours and lines. The desire of artist to produce strong visual effects with abstract figures is present throughout history.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND ART WORKS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of related literature and art works that are relevant and have some bearing on the research. The review of literature and works of art was carried out under the following sub headings;

1) The origin of snakes.

The researcher traces the origin of snakes to available fossil evidence that reveals that snakes may have evolved from burrowing lizards, such as the varanids during the cretateous period. Perkins (2015) corroborates that this hypothesis was strengthened by the discovery of a 113million year fossil of a four legged snake in Brazil that has been named Tetrapodophis amplectus. He maitains that Genetic studies in recent years have indicated that limb loss in snakes is associated with DNA mutations. Olivera da Silva (2016) suggests that snake evolution and diversification was not a straight forward process but rather an interplay between natural selection and developmental processes. However an alternative hypothesis, based on morphology, suggests the ancestors of snakes were related to extinct aquatic reptiles which in turn are thought to have derived from varamid lizards, Tzika (2011).

2. Paintings of snake in art.

The serpent or snake is one of the oldest and most widespread in art. Serpents are represented as potent guardians of temples and other sacred places. Dianne (2016), explains that Delphi was represented in the vase paintings and sculptures as serpent. It is mentioned in www.academia.edu, that “the head of medusa in paintings and symbols” is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

From among available literature in the field, accessed by the researcher, Wallach (2014) reveals that there are close to three thousand four hundred (3,400) different forms of snakes (including species and sub species in the world today). He further observed that snakes are found throughout the world except Antarctica, Iceland, Greenland and New Zealand. Most snakes are found in tropical regions and are found in many habitats including water, forest or trees, deserts and prairies. Snakes like to live in damp, dark, cool places where food is abundant. However, snakes possess increased number of vertebrae and have developed two novelties among vertebrates

Snakes consume a variety of items including termites, rodents, birds, frogs, small Deer and other reptiles. They eat their prey whole and are able to consume prey three times as large as the diameter of their heads. Thus, their lower jaw can separate from the upper jaw. Snakes fake or camouflage to protect themselves from predators as a strategy, Pfennig (2001).

Snakes can be grouped into three:

a. Non-poisonous (with solid ungrooved teeth throughout), which include Typhlopidae, Leptoty Phlopidae, Pythonidae, colour brinae and dasypeltinae.

b. Moderately poisonous (with one or two pairs of simple grooved fangs situated towards the back of the jaw): these include the opisthoglyphus or Boignae of the family of colupridae.

c. Highly poisonous (frong fanged): Proteroglyphous, elapidae, hydrophidae and the solenoglyphous viperidae.

Fortunately, really dangerously poisonous snakes fatal to man are in the great minority and number. In all, these comprise of only about three hundred including some fifty sea snakes out of a world total of three thousand odd. Blair (2008)

It is noted by Scanlon (2007), that the giant of the snakes' world are to be found among the non-poisonous python and boas; anaconda of Amazonia which grows to at least 37ft, the reticulated python of south east Asia with the length of 33feet, the African python whose length is up to 25feet, Amethystine python of New Guinea which is up to 22ft, Indian python 20feet, and the Boa constrictor of central and southern America which has length of up to18 feet.

Blair (2008), further explains that the external anatomy of snakes shows a range of variation from the slender elongated head and body of the free snakes (Philothammus, the Lothornis) to the flat broad headed and thick bodied odder (Bithis). Normally there is an odd number of rows of scales round the body and in some forms, scales bears one or two shallow depression or "apical pits" near their anterior ends.

The skin of a snake is shed at varying intervals, the first moult taken place not long after birth and thereafter several times a year depending on rate of growth and may reach as much as nine to ten times a year in the tropics, where no hibernation is necessary and growth progresses more quickly. In temperate regions, the skin is always invariably shed shortly after a snake emerges from its winter hibernation. The old skin is usually shed all in one piece, Cardwell (2015). The reason for this periodical shedding of the skin is that the outer layer or the honey material does not grow on its own, and must therefore, be renewed to accommodate the increase in size of the snake. In the skin of many snakes, there are small glands of various kinds some of which exude secretions that leave scent trails to enable them to locate one another for mating purposes.

Most snakes live a solitary existence as there is little or no social organization among them. Helen Beaular Thompson in Webster (2015), explains that Mating usually takes place after emerging from hibernation or after the first spring rains. In courtship, which precedes

actual mating, the male usually sidles up to the female and then proceeds to making elaborate and protracted advances including rubbing, protruding and nudging her with his head, crawling over her back and investigating her thoroughly with his flickering and highly sensitive tongue. Practically, all snakes are hatched from egg which, the majority of the snakes are layed, and are left for external incubation that is oviparous. While in some forms, the eggs are retained within the female's body until they are fully incubated so that the young are to all intents and purposes produced alive (viviparous).Sever (2016).

In most non-poisonous snakes, including python and colubrids, the method of overcoming their prey is by constriction, which the coils of the body are thrown round the victim so quickly as to avoid the later inflicting any damage. The whole operation of seizing the prey and wrapping it in the coil of the body is a matter of a few seconds, and is usually so quick as to confuse the prey that the latter has no time to defend itself. When all movement has stopped and the snake is satisfied that the victim is dead, the original mouth hold is relinquished and the snake then passes its head over the victim's body from the left until the head is reached, and relaxes its coils as the swallowing proceeds.

Although most snakes show preference for certain types of prey, many are omnivorous and will take, when the need arises either worm or cold blooded prey. On the whole, this snakes which feed on the cold blooded prey appears to digest it more quickly and thus also feeds more frequently, than those subsisting on warm blooded creatures. Prey is found by sight, tasted by vibratory impulses, and also by waiting patiently in suitable spots where prey is most likely to approach closely. On the other hand, small snakes subsist on insects and other smaller invertebrates. No matter where they live, snakes are subjected to pressures from the living (abiotic and biotic) parts of the environment Wallach (2019).

Snakes have many enemies, among whom probably the greatest is man, followed by cannibals, among their own kind. Other enemies include some of the larger lizards that is monitor (varamus) and many predatory birds (eagles) and mammals (pigs). On the whole, snakes play an important role in the economy of the country in great measures, particularly as most prey on rodents, the universal plague of man, while many small species (worm and blind snakes) account for the consumption of large numbers of insects and invertebrates and thus, in their small way, help in keeping such in check. Precisely, snakes venoms are much in demand for therapeutic purposes. The haemotoxic and neurotoxic venoms provide sedatives and pain killers. Shed snakes skins are used by many birds in the building of their nest. Snakes are often maligned and misunderstood, about their true nature, primarily out of ignorance Gauthier (2015).

From the above, African artists were inspired by their environment in creating contemporary paintings. Contemporary artists have derived inspiration from nature and depicted beautiful paintings. These creams of artist explore nature in diverse ways and have produced works which were inspired by forms and elements in nature. Artist such as, Talatu (2013), was inspired by Spiders web, Kola (2013), inspired by one motif among others. They all value the beauty of nature and reiterated the need for artist to manipulate forms in order to create new visual conceptions. Similarly artist like Oladesu (2006), Skinner (1988), demonstrated their creative potentials by exploring some elements such as butterfly and unusual views of plants and infrastructure.

2.3 Review of Related Art Works

Dermott (1969) affirms that Otto-Maseus Van Schriek ‘’enlarged the definition of still life by painting entirely from nature. He copied snakes, lizards and rear insects’’. It is noted by Philips in Oladesu (2006), that James Audubon was ‘’influenced by nature ad her product’’. Trowell (2004) discusses the ornamental motifs in Africa by categorizing the

motifs into organic, decorative and geometric. According to her, ‘’some of the motifs from Africa have zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and geometric designs’’. Ekpu, (1996) explains that Nsibidi motifs from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria rely on the power of line to create two dimensional pictorial spaces. That is the Efik culture of the south eastern part of Nigeria specifically of the Unran and Calabar people of Akwa Ibom and Cross River state. Babawale (2010) also adds that ‘’there are several Nsibidi signs such as snakes, leopard, turtle and birds, etc. that appeared on ukra clothes and may signify multiple levels of meaning beyond the representation of the actual subject’’. However, there may be deeper or more esoteric meanings associated with some symbols that may only be known to certain categories of initiates.



Fig.1: Title: Fold, Artist: Bridget Riley, Date: 2004, Medium: Acrylic, Size: unknown, Source: pinterest http//www.pinterest.com

The painting entitled “Fold” is produced by one of the exponents of “ OP art” Bridget Riley. The work is a juxtaposition of geometric patterns, lines and colour, using the primacy of yellow, blue and light blue amidts white spaces to heightened optical effect. The clean lines and colour arrangements create some beautiful visual effects. Sylvan (2004) opines that the desire of artists to produce strong visual effects with abstract figures is present throughout history.

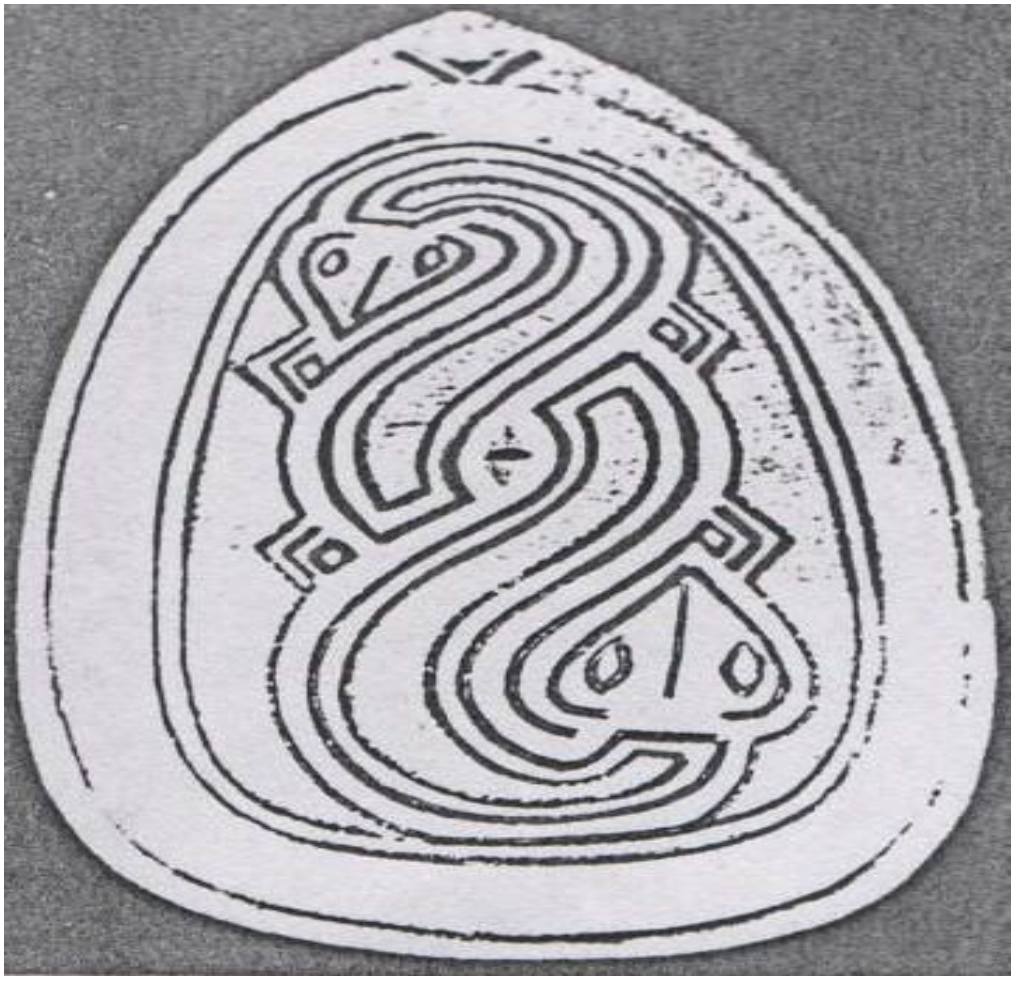


Fig. 2: Title: Snake Motif on Carved Guard, Artist: Unknown, Medium: Enamel on guard, Size: Unknown, Date: Unknown, Source: from Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia

The motif of the work (Serpent) is painted in a mirror pattern. The heads of the snakes depicted at the top far left and the other one depicted at the bottom right, intertwined gives a geometric treatment. It is expressed by Kalilu (2013) that zoomorphic motifs found on

painted gourds in Ogbomosho, are peculiar to the Yoruba artistic culture and many African cultures. He posits that the people have deep observations of their natural environment from which most of the traditional symbols, motifs and patterns have been drawn.

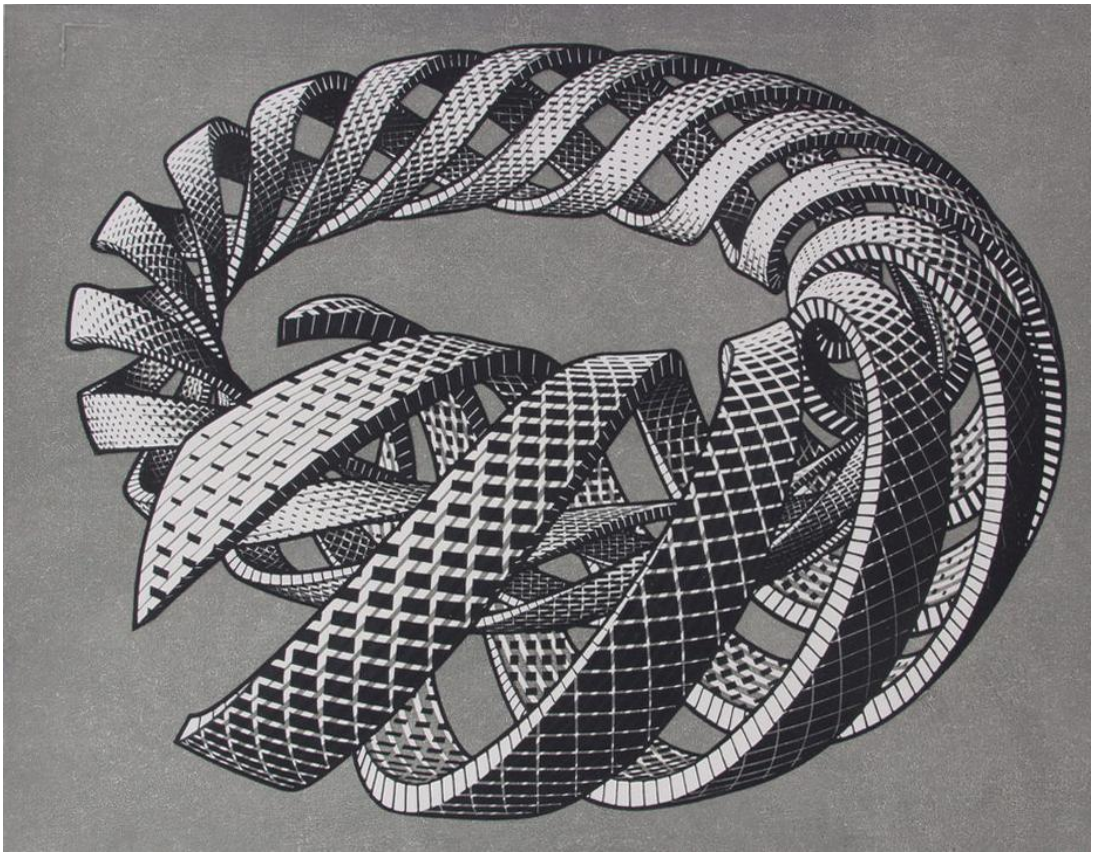


Fig. 3: Title: Circles, Spiral and Snakes, Artist: M.C Escher, Medium: inked woodblocks on paper Size: 49.8cmX44.7cm (19.6incX17.6inc), Date: 1969, Source: www.artistsmarket.com

The work or composition by the Dutch artist M C Escher in black, grey and white is a systematic arrangement of geometric, spiral lines and shapes constructed of four parallel bands .Each band shaded with subtle lines. The curves both wrap around and spring out of loops which seems to have no beginning and no end. This optical illusion creates a path way for artist exploration.

Price (2008) states that, ‘’the patterns Escher composed in cycles, spirals and snakes’’ gives a path way in which we can discover even more than the artists himself, for the doors he opened often ultimately reveal what we find reflected in the mirrors of our own

perception''. ''Ring snakes is complex in structure. Execution and meaning; expressing the duality of natural and perfect forms. He further opines that if artists create, let it not be abstract or vague but rather let it concretely represent an idea wishing to be expressed.



Fig. 4: Title: Wolves of Snake River in progress, Artist: Laurie Justus Pace, Date: Unknown, Size: 101.6cm x 81.3cm, Medium: Oil on Canvas, Source: www.dailypainters.com

The painting titled 'Wolves in a Snake River in progress depicts wolves in a semi abstract form amidst the vertical strokes that looks like snakes.

This work is a creative experiment in the use of vertical, triangular and curved lines to achieve visual harmony. The experiment with vertical brush strokes has coalesced in a fusion of diverse images. The artist achieved a complete harmony in the picture by means of interplay of colours and balanced arrangement, elements and principles of design. The dominant colour in the work is yellow ochre. Other colours include: white, red, brown, and black.



Fig. 5: Title: *Owls*, From the *Oja Suite,* Artist: Uche Okeke, Date: 1962, Size: Unknown, Medium: Ink on paper, Source: The Estate of Uche Okeke (Newark Museum)

This pen and ink drawing with remarkable vertical lines, zigzags, spirals (Agwolagwo), indicates snake motifs with spare manipulations of lines and spontaneous employment of Uli symbols. In the drawing, "*Owls" are* depicted on the left and right parts of the painting. There are also spirals (*agwolagwo* or snake motif) and v-shapes (*okala isinwaoji* or three-lobed kola nut motif).The vertical work come together to form two owls perched amidst dense foliage under a full moon.



Fig. 6: Title: Snake Folk Motif Design (wall painting), Artist: Ajay Shrivastava, Date: 1981, Size: Unknown, Medium: Acrylic, Source: www.shutterstock.com

The painting of Ajay Shrivastava on a wall painting shows the intertwining of six snakes in a hexagonal display of the snake motif. The snakes are harmonized to foster a formalistic tendency and conventional usage of form and space. The work shows a formal order transfused with warm red colour that appears at the background of the picture plane. The composition is not space consumptive. The rich pattern created at the borders make the work decorative and ornamental.



Fig. 7: Title: Snake Folk Motif Design wall painting, Artist: Unknown, Date: Unknown, Size: Unknown, Medium: Unknown, Source: www. shutterstock.com

This painting in figure 6 shows movement of the serpent with patterns in abstract forms segmented to create three paintings in one. The dominant colour in this painting is yellow ochre. Black is used to define the abstract shapes. At the bottom left is a large shape in white. In the work, colours are applied to achieve visual simplicity. The composition has an open space at the top, it shows a formal order transfused with colours to give a warm feeling. The patterns created make the work not only decorative but beautifully ornamented to acknowledge the artistic creativity.



Fig. 8: Title: Unknown, Artist: Unknown, Date: Unknown, Size: Unknown, Medium: Unknown, Source: www.shutterstock.com

This painting untitled (figure 8) shows a synthesis of unity. Two snake heads appeared in the work in black triangles, at the centre of the work and top right. Spiral lines are created round the borders, which culminate into shapes that engulf a texture from top down. In between the snake head shapes towards the middle right is a single thin line which depicts rectangular movement. As it tapers downwards it becomes thicker and joins the lines that forms the borders.

The human body is a material for art making. It can be painted, or it can be part of a performance or spectacle. Lazzari (2008).She added that the living body energizes, personalizes, or adds emotional content to the artwork. Snakes motif tattoo designs (body art) were simulated by Polynesian and Japanese, tattoos have become a main stream part of western fashion and are quite fascinating. The fact is that snakes are such creatures that incite strong emotions. The permutation and combinations that feature of snakes poses and the patterns from the snake motif tattoos are endless. These snake based tattoos can look f

good on most parts of the body. The snake design when captured perfectly to look as if it is in rippling in motion can look quite riveting.

The snake could simply be a fascinating subject with both visual and symbolic values to be used as a tattoo design either by itself or as part of a greater design as could be seen in these figures.

It is observed that more women than men have snake tattoos. The reason why this design is so popular can be varied. Among Asians, it could be because the serpent is intertwined with their folklore, their culture and religious aspects, whereas in other cultures, the snake could simply be as a tattoo design by itself or as part of a greater design. Figure 9-15 shows tattoos on the shoulder, back and arms. Various tattoos artists like Stefano Cacciaconti, Shawn Hebrunk, Alex Neumi and Gencho have made beautiful designs using the snake motifs on various parts of the body. As shown in figure 9 below.



Fig. 9: Title: Large snake tattoo, Artist: Unknown, Medium: Tattoo ink Size: Unknown, Date: 2012 Source: Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

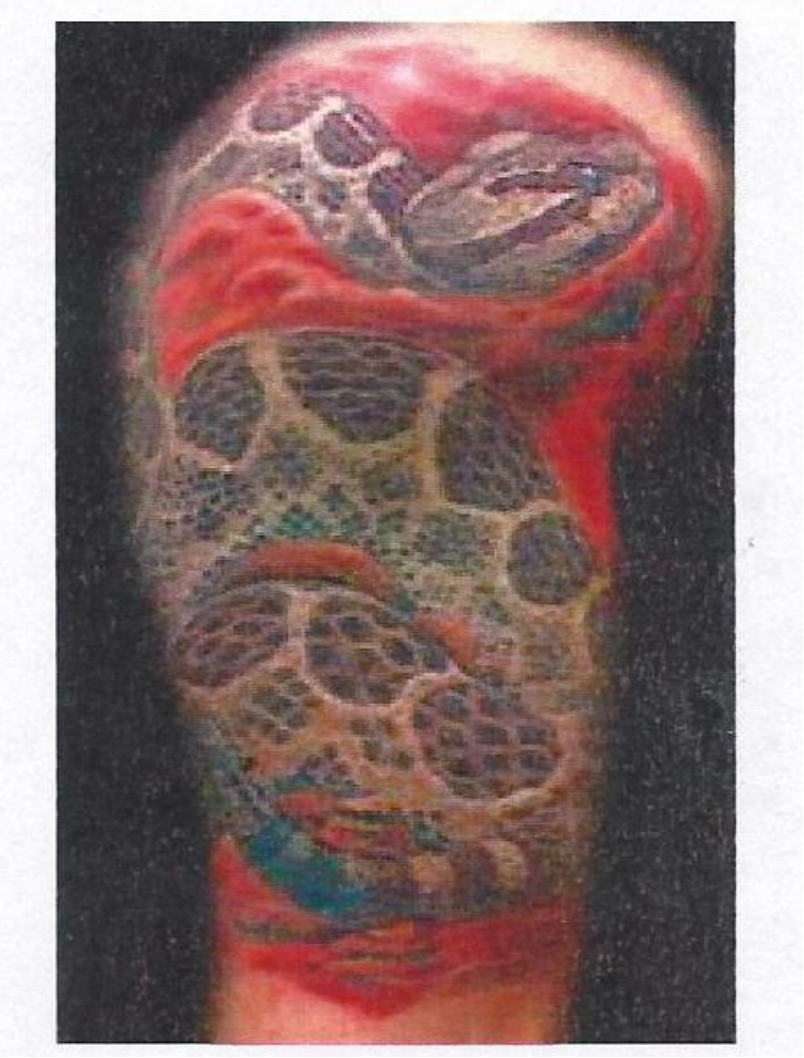


Fig. 10: Title: Realistic Colour Snake, Artist: Stefano Cacciaconti, Medium: Tattoo Ink, Size: Unknown, Date: Unknown Source: Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

Figure 10 entitled “realistic colour snake” creates a very meaningful body canvas that represents inner transformation. The realistic and poisonous inspired masculine tattoo design shows a rhythm of nature and that it is part of their seductive and suggestive mysterious force.

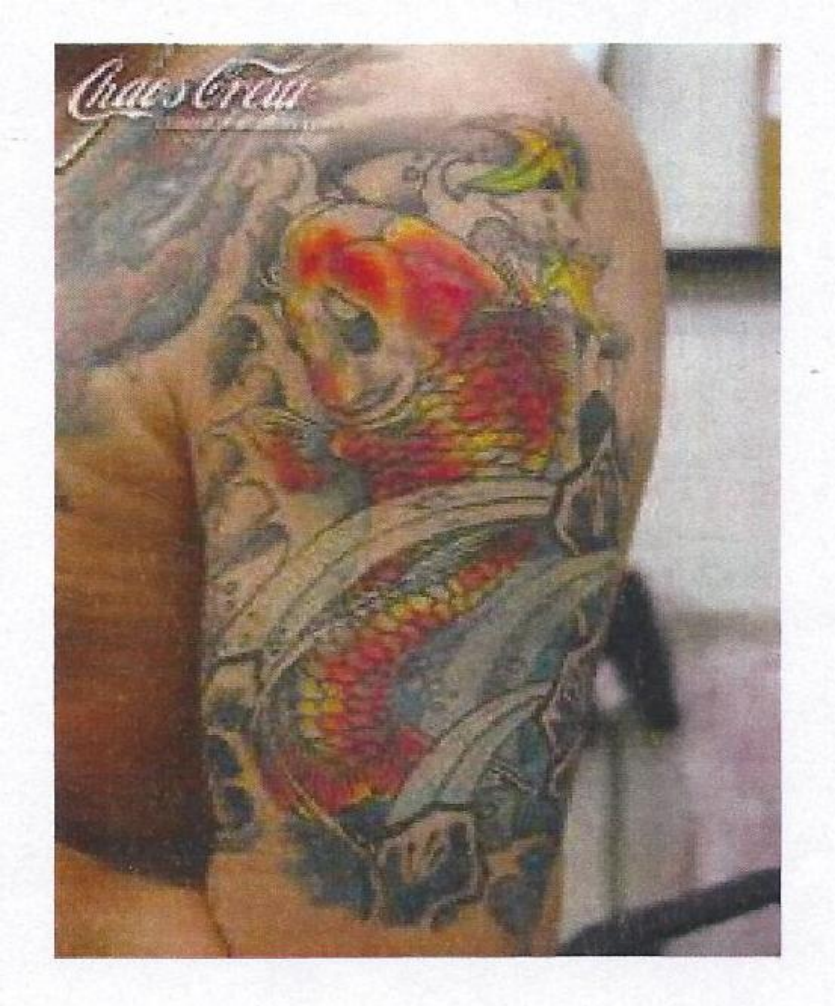


Fig.11: Title: Unknown, Artist: Alex Neumi, Medium: Tattoo Ink, Size: Unknown Date: 2015, **Source**: Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

The tattoo in figure 11 shows the subject (snake) fanged and the scales incorporated in to the picture. The picture plane is interplayed with floral motifs which depict horror. The work is executed in brown, blue, red and ochre colours.

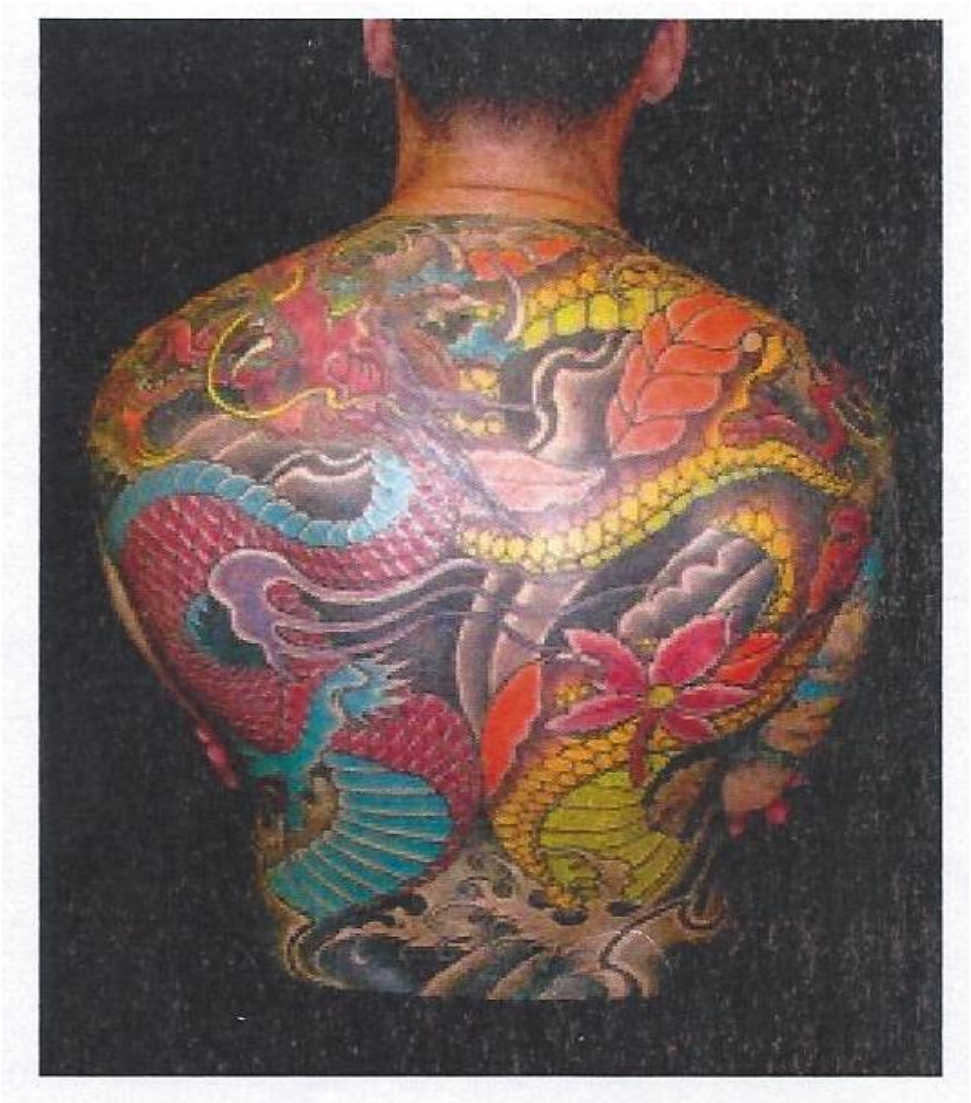


Fig. 12: Title: unknown, **Artist**: unknown, **Medium**: Tattoo ink, **Size**: unknown
Date: Unknown, Source: Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

Figure 12 tattoo shows a masculine inspired design with floral motifs and snakes. At the top right shoulder, the snake seems to open its mouth wide to swallow something. The spiral and curvilinear lines in the picture plane dominates the work making it pleasant to the eyes. The human torso from back view employed as canvas in this work makes it quite unique and interesting.



Fig. 13: Title: Unknown, Artist: Gencho, Medium: Tattoo Ink, Size: Unknown Date: 2010, Source: http//ss:tattooartist.org

These tattoos are unique on the upper shoulder blades and forearm to the bicep and the wrist locations. The snake is a major object of design in the picture interplayed with lines and floral motifs. Red, blue, yellow and patches of black can be seen in this picture.



Fig. 14: Title: Unknown, Artist: Unknown, Medium: Tattoo Ink, Size: Unknown Date: Unknown, Source: Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

Figure 14 shows the slithering movement of the snake on the arm of the bearer. The tattooed arm added a reptilian vibe to his body transformation. This snake tattoo executed is a natural representation with designs and fine details.



Fig. 15: Title: Snake motif tattoo design, Artist: Chris Ayalin, Medium: Tattoo Ink Date: Unknown, **Size**: Unknown, **Source**: Japanese Tattoos*: Samurai Warrior Tattoos*

Tattoos often feature renditions of traditional samurai masks as could be seen in figures 15 and 16. Originally, the masks featured faces with terrorizing, intimidating expressions. The masks served several purposes: they protected the identity of the warrior and hid the emotions of the fighter. Samurai masks can serve as stand-alone designs or can be incorporated into a larger, more elaborate designs. It could be seen in this figure that the picture at the right chest portrays an element of human cartoon with fanged teeth at the right as the centre of attraction, and the fanged snake at the top left. However some floral motifs are incorporated with curvilinear lines moving within the picture plane.

“The thing about snake tattoo designs is that you can never be indifferent when you look at one; either they completely fascinate you and you want to get one or you are completely repulsed by the whole thing. However, the thing is there are many snake tattoo designs for men that have a lot of meaning and are actually preferred by many people. In addition, the snake tattoo meaning adds additional dimension to the whole thing and this is also one of the reasons that people get them done on their skin Focus (2012).



Fig. 16: Title: Chinese Banner, Artist: Unknown, Date: 1934, Size: Unknown Medium: Ink on Fabric, **Source:** Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

At Chiang–sha, a painted banner from the tom of Ta-hou-fu-jen was found in 1934, painted by an unknown artist. This very large composition of birds and snakes intertwined on a piece of cloth has yellow, blue and red colours over a black background. This indicates that Chinese mythology is a symbol of veneration, worship and honour. The snake continues to be a powerful emblem of renewal and transition.

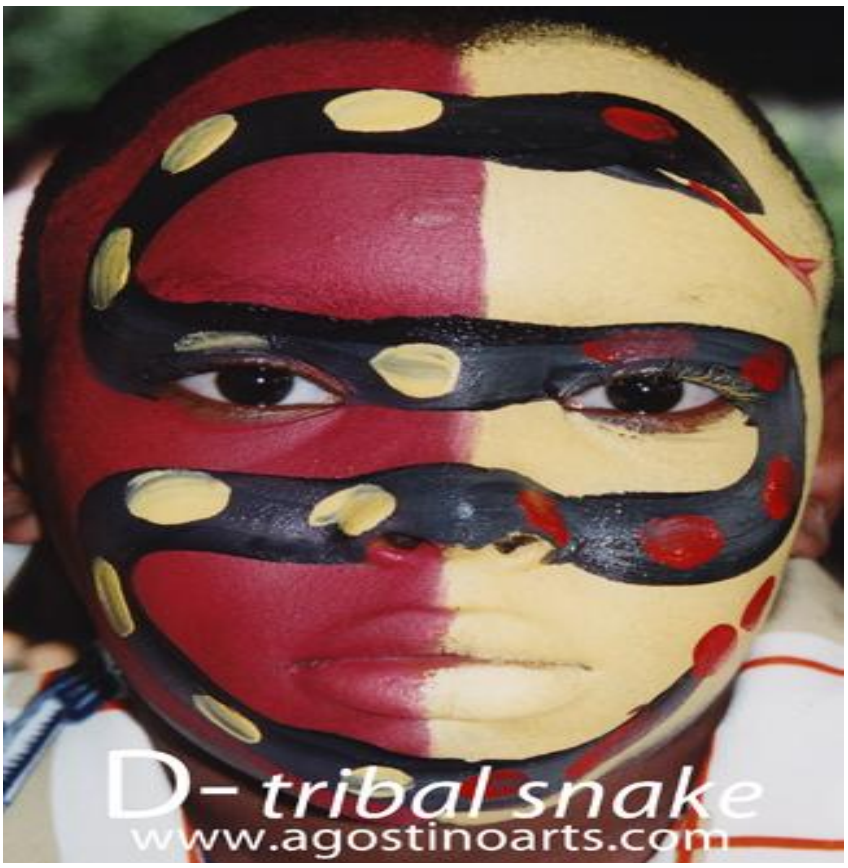


Fig. 17: Title: D-tribal snake face painting, Artist: Agostino, Date: Unknown
Size: Unknown, Medium: Unknown,
Source: D-tribal snake www. Agostinoart.com

Body ornamentation is an art form in many African traditional cultures, where rituals are the supremely important events for the community, governing all aspects of life. In some cultures snakes were fertility symbols, for example the Hopi people of North America performed an annual snake dance to celebrate the union of Snake Youth (a Sky spirit) and Snake Girl (an Underworld spirit) and to renew fertility of Nature. www.Augustinoart reiterates that during the dance, live snakes were handled and at the end of the dance the snakes were released into the fields to guarantee good crops. "The snake dance is a prayer to the spirits of the clouds, the thunder and the lightning, that the rain may fall on the growing crops." As in this figure, the facial painting depicts a snake moving on the face in red, black and white (figure 17). In other cultures snakes symbolized the umbilical cord, joining all humans to Mother Earth. The Great Goddess often had snakes as her familiars

sometimes twining around her sacred staff, as in ancient Crete and they were worshiped as guardians of her mysteries of birth and regeneration.

There is also mask worn over the head of a female elder who dances for the Sande woman's society. This embodies spirits of the forest who request (through dreams) that be.

The use of snake motifs for decorating one's face has been part of the cultural make up of some societies, from time immemorial. Force painting is a common theme across cultures as divergent as African tribes. Face painting has been used for artistic expression since ancient times. The colours convey a strong bond and meaning amongst people who have a face painting tradition. Sometimes, they choose to do so as a part of a tribal ritual but the colourful and dynamic language of the snake face painting remains the same.

Painting is essentially a combination of lines, forms, colours, tones, texture and space. It attempts to convey the spoken and unspoken expression with the strokes of a brush

Facial paintings are considered to be an important tradition among Africans. It is a sacred social act of distinction and a cultural heritage. On special occasions, faces of the tribe members are painted to augment one's appearance. This painting entitled "D-Tribal snake" shows the snake being painted in an "S" form, from the forehead, in a Prussian blue colour, with dot marks in red and cream colours.



Fig. 18: Title: The Maya Vision Serpent, Artist: Mendes Derrida, Medium: Ink on paper, Size: Unknown, Date: Unknown, Source: From Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia

The vision serpent is thought to be the most important of the Maya serpents. ‘’it was usually bearded and had a rounded snout. It was also often depicted as having two heads or with the spirit of a god or ancestor, people would experience visions in which they communicated with the ancestors or gods. These visions took the form of a giant serpent ‘’which served as a gateway to the spirit realm. (From Wikipedia: vision serpent).



Fig. 19: Tile: Vishmu resting on Ananta-Shesha with Lakshi massaging his lotus feet
Artist: Unknown, **Size**: Unknown, **Date**: Unknown, **Source**: Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia

The most well-known version of this art work is the Egyptian-Greek Ourobouros. It is believed to have been inspired by the Milky Way, as some ancient text referred to as a serpent of light residing in the heavens. The ancient Egyptian associated it with the Wadjet, one of their oldest deities as well as other aspect, Hatho. In Norse mythologies the world serpent (or Midgard serpent) known as Jormungandr encircled the world in the ocean abyss biting its own tail. In Hindu mythology Lord Vishmu is said to sleep while floating on the cosmic water on the serpent Shesha. In the Puranas Shesha holds all the planets of the universe on his hoods and constantly sings the glorious of Vishmu from all his mouths. He is sometimes referred to as ‘’Ananta shesha’’, which means ‘’Endless Shesha’’.



Fig. 20: Title: Yoruba Snake motif, Artist: Unknown, Medium: Unknown, Date: Unknown, **Size**: Unknown, **Source**: Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia



Fig. 21: Title: Snake motif on Calabash decoration, Artist: Unknown,
Medium: Unknown, **Date**: Unknown, **Size**: Unknown
Source: Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia

In figures 20 and 21 shows the Yoruba decorative art, which featured in Oshogbo, depict snake motifs on calabash decoration and batik.



Fig. 22: Title: Mythological Ouroboros serpent swallowing its tail,
Artist: Theodoros Pelecanos, **Date**: 1478, **Size**: Unknown,
Medium: Unknown, **Source**: Wikipedi+
a the free encyclopaedia

The Ouroboros from the Greek *tail-devouring* is an ancient symbol depicting serpent or dragon eating its own tail. The Ouroboros often Symbolises self-reflectivity or cyclicality, especially in the sense of something constantly re-creating itself, the eternal return, and other things such as the phoenix, which operate its cycle that begins anew as soon as the end. It can also represent the idea of primordial unity related to something existing in or persisting from the beginning with such force or qualities it cannot be extinguished. Carl Jung interpreted the Ouroboros as having an archetypal significance to the human psyche. The Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann write of it as a representation of the pre-ego

‘’dawn state’’, depicting the undifferentiated infancy experience of both mankind and the individual child.



Fig. 23: Title: Snakes-in-the-grass, Artist: Donna Blackhall, Date: Unknown, **Size**: Unknown, **Medium**: Accrylic on canvas, **Source**: www.shutterstock.com

The figures in the picture are subjected to formal distortion. The painting shows a number of snakes together in the picture plane. The subtle forms, the designed and the communicative power shown in the work are expression of artistic ingenuity. With the aid of strong hues, which enhances the images, the artist explores the depth of projection and interpretation of forms. Yellow, green and blue colours added beauty to the painting.



Fig. 23: Title: Stock-vector-set-of-multicolored-striped-snakes-symbols-of-chinese-new-year-vector-version-118627684, Artist: Stock-vector, Date: Unknown, Size: Unknown, **Medium**: Accrylic on canvas, **Source**: www.shutterstock.com

The snakes' motifs in this work are patterned to look like textile. The snakes appear as husband and wife in the picture because of the pairing. This iconographical approach makes the work impressive.

In conclusion, this review has focused on a few works of contemporary Artist, both in Europe and in Africa. Their contributions in forms of subject matter, medium, style, and the general composition and other elements are appreciated. The researcher has realised that most of these painters did not use the snake as a major motif in their composition; rather, they used it to balance their composition. Except in figures 16, 20 and 22 where the artists used it as a subject matter. In this study, the form and the motif from the snake will be magnified and emphasised.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the materials used for data collection for preliminary studies; the method of data analysis and the mode of production of the art works are discussed.

3.2 Research Design

For the purpose of this study, practice based research method is used. The study adopts quantitative method of research. This method allows the research and researcher to the freedom to manipulate and creatively use the elements and principles of design, values, and how they are used as technique and concept in visual art production. With this, it can lead to specialized research insights which can then be generalized and written up as research (Smith and Dean and Egonwa in Damden, 2018). The authors emphasize the creative and artistic practice in itself. In creative practice, the training and specialized knowledge that creative practitioners and the processes that engaged in while in the studio when producing art work were necessary for this study.

3.3 Area of the study

The area of study for this research is painting.

3.3.1 Presentation/Materials

The materials used in the research work are selected media of artist's oil colour, acyclic, pastel, pencil, charcoal canvas and wooden frames, as well as a camera which were all used for the preliminary studies. The researcher experimented with conventional approach of single panel picture frames. This was meant to explore the stages and variety in the painting.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this research was obtained through secondary sources. Okobia (2008) noted that data can be gathered through primary or secondary sources. The secondary sources are images gathered from books and the internet, which include study, drawings and sketches. The bulk of the research was through the internet services and library documents (Photographs from textbooks).

Various sketches of motifs were made from selected snakes. The Selection was based on the judgemental preference in some elements like form, composition and personal choice or interest. The snake motifs were focused on using charcoal and pencil on paper to realize them. In the course of this study, detailed representational drawings and paintings were later developed from the selected snake motifs and forms. Also in the course of the study, the researcher killed a viper and made snapshots to help in the study of colour, movement, pattern and motif when in motion and at rest.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data for this study is basically secondary data. However, for the comprehension of the subject matter, the researcher consults internet addresses, journals, exhibition catalogues, text books, and encyclopaedia, where relevant drawings and paintings of selected artists were carried out, to enhance the study. The data collected were made into paintings which were classified into representational stage and developmental stage. This gave the researcher an easy systematic interpretation of the various themes treated. It was also an aid to the developmental process of the study.

a. Preliminary Stage

i. Exploratory – scales and floral





ii. Forms and motifs





b. Developmental Stage





c. Abstract Stage (figural infusion)







3.6 Preliminary Stage

i. Exploratory

This is the first stage and the beginning of the study. However, the research attempted to start from "the unknown'' (Buhari 2014 during a critique) by depicting the snake scale, patterns as it moves away with other elements such as the plants. At least three works were painted with much emphasis on that objective. This helped the researcher to explore more on the snake habitat and its environment. In some cases the movement of the snake (caterpillar craw, Writhing) of the snake are given more attention in the painting.

ii. Forms and Motifs

This aspect or stage is on forms and motifs. The forms and motifs were selected from texture of the snake and interplayed for aesthetic compositional purposes.

i. Developmental stage

This stage is the transformation and total abstraction of the snake motifs and forms. To be specific the researcher spontaneously used the snake motifs to come up with more advanced composition.

ii. Figural infusion

At this stage, figures were infused into total abstraction.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF STUDIO WORKS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a record of works of research produced in the studio, which have been catalogued. It includes illustrations of these creative paintings which are shown in plates and series. The works are categorically discussed in the context of their production.

However, some issues were encountered or experienced during the course of this research work, which varied from technique to creativity. In the first instance, there was no problem of selecting from the variety of snakes that could be used. After careful consideration, some snakes were selected based on their shapes, colours and physical appearance. Another issues was how to make an abstraction from the snake because the pattern and lines seems textile like in painting if not carefully handled. The few patterns selected as motifs were diffused within thematic contexts and interrelating them with space, form and colour.

It was however observed that some elements of art (line, space, colour, texture, repetition, harmony, rhythm, movement, balance and dominance), can be found on the motif and patterns of a snake. Thus, it can be used to teach the principles and elements of art. Most snake paintings were painted with floral motifs. It was also observed that to study the natural colours of the snake, it should not be preserved with chemicals but dried. This is so because the agent reduces the snake's natural colour intensity. On a general note, only few African contemporary artists have worked with snakes as compared to European contemporary artists.

For the purpose of this research work, analyses of twenty three paintings were chosen out of the numerous works that were made in the course of this research. The works are categorised into two major stages:

a) Representational stage
    i. Exploratory snakes and floral plates
    ii. Forms and motifs plates (derived from snake patterns)

b) Developmental stage
    i. Total transformation plates
    ii. Figural infusion plates

4.2 Analysis of Works

4.2.1 Representational Stage

This is a representation of the subject matter. This means that the works executed in this group are in different styles, aimed at acquainting the researcher and the viewer with the subject matter in its position, with the view of appreciating the study.



Plate I: Title: Adoration. **Date:** 2016, **Artist:** Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Oil on canvas **Size:** 90cm x 80cm

The painting in plate I depicts the head of a serpent coming out of its abode with a fierce look. Towards the bottom of the work are rough structures that depicts burrows or holes on the rock. The forms in red, brown and blue colours signifies some calmness. However the work is executed in a combination of cool and warm colours.



Plate II: Title: Camouflage, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Enamel on Canvas

"Camouflage" is a liquidised work. It depicts the movement of the snake in a combatant action. The colours are laid using the splatter technique as insinuated by John Pollock (1962). The work depicts the gaboon viper in action. Brown, yellow, green and white manipulated gives an impression of military camouflage uniform. The effect so created, gives a path way for experimentation with colours. Camouflage is peculiar with snakes in general.



Plate III Title: Action, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,

Medium: Enamel on Canvas, **Size**: 60x75cm

This work is executed using the primary colours dominantly over a dark background. The artist deliberately splashes the yellow in an "S" form and also the red at the far right, middle and bottom left to strike a balance. This painting represents the Black necked spitting cobra (Naja haja) snake in action. The flow of the colours gives a horrific impression. This gives the researcher the opportunity to interrogate the texture and patterns on the structure at a close view.



Plate IV: Title: Dream, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Oil on canvas, **Size**: 90x100cm

DREAM: Shows a simple pattern and texture of the carpet viper snake.

Dream literally implies a series of images, events and feelings that happen in the mind of an individualwhile viewing this painting.

It represents a radial balance with vertical and horizontal movements. This abstract painting executed in dull colours, although light yellow was introduced for emphasis and to portray movement. The degree of light and dark colours are subtle. Dream portrays the possibility in life of things not appearing as they seem. A painting like this may stir viewers to reflect on making the impossible possible.



Plate V: Title: Fantasy, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Oil on canvas, **Size**: 80X90CM

The work Fantasy Shown in Plate IV is a painting showing scales/segments in an “S” form. The colours were manipulated to create movement and harmony. The cool colours at the background were used to portray fantastic feeling. The yellow, yellow ochre and light blue suggests distance, while light purple and ultramarine blue suggest closeness.

Most people live in a world of fantasy today thus a pleasant situation is imagined but that is unlikely to happen. The scales placed in the centre are to balance the composition. The placement of the yellow ochrerish colour to the left and a blend of light blue to the right signify calmness.



Plate VI: Title: Things Fall Apart, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Acrylic on Canvas, **Size**: 100X110CM

In this painting, the motifs are well defined and symbolically represented. The colours used are: green with orange, yellow ochre, and blue tones. This abstract painting depicts things fall apart as the centre could not hold other shapes together .A small shape in yellow at the bottom, dark blue as well as green dominates the abstract shaped lines and other shade of colours are introduced to reflect movement. The motifs stand alone. The title of this painting is a reflection of the situation in Nigeria where the poor have become the cannon fodder of the hegemonious rich and also the ethnic and religious crisis that dominates the front Pages of our news bulletin. The title is influenced by Things Fall Apart and the centre cannot hold as postulated by legendary master Chinua Achebe.



Plate VII: Title: Untitled, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Oil on canvas, **Size**: 90x100cm

The work – is characterised by simplified abstract forms. The painting has a patch of dark colours but is sharply lit in the middle area of the picture plane with bright colours and lucid patterns. The researcher represents a dramatic scene of snakes coming together on a round table for discussion and decision making. The composition in this painting is an abstraction of motifs using oil colour. The patters are altered for balance and harmony



Plate VIII: Title: Sambisa, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Oil and canvas, **Size**: 90X105cm

This work in plate VIII titled "Sambisa" is an infusion of colours to create an effect. Sambisa forest which lies in the North East of Nigeria has become the abode of the reknown terrorist group called "Boko Haram", which has attracted security attention. The flora and fauna of the forest inhabits snakes and wild animals of different kind. At the central view of the work, the yellow and green stands out, while the patch of brown with a blend of light blue at the bottom and far right exuding from the central is deliberate. This gives the representation of the subject and the environment. The green and yellow portrays the flora.



Plate IX: Title: Okamma, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Acrylic, **Size**: 100x105cm

Okamma is an Igbo word which literary mean “goodness”. Some Igbo mothers name goodness after their daughters with the hope that the goodness and mercies of God Almighty shall follow them always. The use of yellow, dark blue and brown colours with the flowing lines suggests movement and enhances the painting composition. The gold colour that dominates this painting symbolises wealth and goodness. The composition is rendered in acyclic on a horizontal picture plane. The work has a bustle of colourful expression.

Geometric Representation

In this category, the rendition is the distortion stage where the subject is expressed in geometric forms. It is a non-representational experiment whereby lines and shapes are used to redefine the "garter" snake, with an attempt at giving a unique visual expression. In these compositions, the application of flat colours to create visual aesthetic expression is employed.



Plate X: Title: Ultimate, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Poster Colour on Chip board, **Size**: Chip board size

This work entitled "ultimate"is geometricalisation of shapes in a consistent whole. The middle triangular shape in blue with stripes of red, Prussian blue and grey colours gives an impression of a pyramid of food chain. We are dependent on others (plants and animals), others are dependent on us (plants and animals) as we return to mother earth. This work is depicted from the patterns and colours of the cobra snake neck as it ages.



Plate XI: Title: Ceteris Paribus, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Poster Colour on Chip Board, **Size**: 76X84cm

In these plates the experimentation of cubiotic approach was adopted with the use of green, red, blue and their complimentary colours. The composition was rendered in poster colour on a vertical shaped picture plane. The dominant colour green in the painting symbolised wealth. The painting has some bustle of colourful expression to suggest all things being equal (ceteris paribus).



Plate XII: Title: Dialogue, Date 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Poster Colour on Chip Board

This painting titled "Dialogue" is an experimentation with different shades and lines to symbolize Nigerian politicians. The painting symbolizes the incessant confusion that exudes the nascent democracy in Nigeria. The killings, cross carpeting, decamping and rigged elections and the nocturnal activities of politician's calls for this sort of painting to entice a political statement. Also, the composition is captured to deflect the political situation of Nigeria where money is used to influence everything. There's however the juxtaposition of different colours with their shades while the geometricalization of the painting further enhances the beauty.

The shade of red is dark which is often associated with vigour, will-power, rage, anger, leadership, courage, determination, and blood. The blue line is associated with depth and stability of blue and the piquant of red and it symbolizes power and luxury. These colour

combination also represents the green snake, brown snake cobra, carpet viper, Black mamba and the garter snake.

4.3 Category B

4.3.1 Stylized Rendition

The patterns are deemphasized; lines are interplayed within and around the geometric shapes. Emphasis is placed on the motifs that characterized the body of the work and centred on the subject matter. This involves breaking known structures by deliberately stylizing and infusing a sense of individual vision to the forms, motifs and lines.



Plate XIII: Title: Zango, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Acrylic, **Size**: 100X110CM

The popular cattle market in Zaria known as “Zango”, is gradually engulfed by buildings, the market which used to be at the outskirt of the city. The darker area in the middle of the work portrays the position of the market geographically. Other geometricalised shapes

indicates latest mansions. Also, diamond motifs on the snake were varied, while the frontal ones appear bigger. Darker colours in the centre encircled some of the motifs. The dark space in the middle stands out and appears bigger than the rest indicating the centre of the settlement. At the far top right indicates the grey areas being engulfed. The reddish and greenish colours placed in the painting are complimentary. Green and gold symbolised wealth and agriculture while the purple stands for royalty and stability.



Plate XIV: Title: Zamfara, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Oil on Canvas, **Size**: 110X122cm

The painting titled "Zamfara" in Plate V appears to be textile like. Zamfara is home to textiles industry in the North, where textile materials are mass produced. The interplay of yellow ochre, cream and dark blue with an inter twine of tinted red dominates the composition. That large portion at the bottom left engulfing the "D" shape and the moon

shape is not only deliberate, but a reflection of a religious (Islamic) symbol in the work. It is also an attempt to entertain the eyes and to centralise the motif in the composition.



Plate XV: Title: Power shift, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: oil on canvas, **Size**: 110X122cm

The painting titled "Power Shift" (Plate XIV) is rendered in yellow ochre as the dominant pigmentation with Prussian blue at the bottom which tapers towards the north. The colour patterns of the Cobra snake inspires this painting. Power shift is a Nigerian political phenomenon, which symbolises the shift of power from military rule to civilian rule, from the South to the North and vice versa. In the picture is the pathway rendered in Prussian blue which curves to the north. Power shift in Nigeria has been a North and South affair. The engulfed light blue also symbolises the position of power and the light blue at the top signifies calmness and the anxiousness to grab power.



Plate XVI: Title: Zanga zanga, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Acrylic on canvas, **Size**: 100X110cm

Zanga zanga means “protest” in Hausa. At the wake of any mis-hap citizens demonstrate to express their grievances. For instance, the killings in Jos, Borno, Kaduna and some parts of the country attracted a lot of protests. The movement of lines symbolises confusion. The Colours used for this particular composition includes blue, cream, dark brown, pink and orange. At the middle left, the painting is dominated in blue and brown colour which is masculine in nature. There is the feeling of quiet strength in the simple motif in leaf shape. The cream colour in the middle gives a feeling of warmth as it interacts with the pink colour. The movement southward, often emanate from basic semipherical form are seen as being ornamental as could be seen the patterns of the Gaboon viper.



Plate XVII: Title: Lukum, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Acrylic, **Size**: 110X122

"Lukum" literary means "shrine" in Mwaghavul language in plateau state of Nigeria. This work which is characteristically abstract in form, depicts the embellishment of snakelike motifs peculiar to the shrine and fetish objects portrayed. It is by Wallach (2015), that nearly every culture since prehistoric times has worshipped, revered, or feared snakes. He also added that a vast global compendium of superstitions and mythologies about snakes has sprung up. The painting has a blue background. The motifs are lit by dark brown colour and cream. The motifs are floral like giving an impression of the environment. The symbolic elements are portrayed with a nostalgia that is characteristic of snake motif. The dominant colour in the painting (blue) symbolizes calmness.



Plate XVIII: Title : Superstition, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Oil on Canvas, **Size:** 110X122cm

Superstition and mythologies stem from snakes` biological peculiarities: their ability to shade their skin is associated with immortality; their ever open eyes represent omniscience; their propensity for sudden appearance and disappearance allies snakes with magic and ghost Wallach (2019). The painting in Plate XVIII painting shows an impressionistic representation of motifs derived from the rattle, carpet and the viper snakes. The movement of lines and brush strokes all-round the composition gives a free rendition of colour and space. The smaller motifs and the larger ones on the subject are a celebration of lines and colour. The yellow, orange and the sky blue background with interplay of darker hues dominate the work.



Plate XIX: Title: Turning point, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos,
Medium: Oil and canvas, **Size**: 110X122cm

At a point of changing from military rule to democracy in Nigeria (1999), a lot of violence occurred, for instance the O.P.C (Odudua People's Congress) crisis in the south where a lot of people died. As such, wild curved brush strokes were used to indicate that turning point. The country remained stable despite the rumble. In the middle of this painting appears an image that looks like a horse in motion, representing the stability of this nation. Brown and yellow can be seen in all points of the painting surface. The dark colours in green and dark blue were placed deliberately to the centre to attract the viewers' attention to the theme of the work.



Plate XX: Title: Confluence, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Oil and canvas, **Size:** 110X120cm

This painting titled confluence suggests a place where two or more rivers come together and become one. The movement of lines using brush strokes and the flow of lines in green, yellow and cream suggest the confluence of social, political and economic factors in Nigeria, despite the agitation for resource control in some quotas. The ambiance of green is symbolic of agriculture land. The yellow ochre in this painting titled confluence suggests wealth and mineral resources.



Plate XXI: Title: Ectopic, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Oil on Canvas, **Size**: 110X120cm

The movement of lines and the curvilinear lines using brush stokes makes the work splendid. Ectopic is an impression that things are not done on the right track. The visual exuberance, is characteristics of the researcher as he moves away from expressionism. The work has blue, yellow, brown and black in its composition.



Plate XXII: Title: Oasis, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Oil and Canvas, **Size**: 110X120cm

In this plate, titled “oasis,” there is an impressionistic representation of spots on a pattern. The manipulation of brush strokes and colour gives a pathway of flow. The enclosed brown and dark brown in the middle signifies an Oasis of calm in the heart of our nation. The federal capital of Nigeria has never been plunged into crisis as other parts of the country despite the bomb blasts. The chromatic rendition of this composition is passionate with the ochre-rish pigmentation as the dominant feature.



Plate XXIII: Title: End of Discussion, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos

Medium: Oil and Canvas, **Size**: 110X120cm

This piece gives the feeling that no matter how long the night may last, the morning will come with its freshness. Amidst the challenges of insurgency, oil bunkering and cattle rustling, the country forges ahead and remains as one. Harmonious lines in the shade of blues and purple gives a cool and secure feeling, while the isolated dark blue gives the feeling of perspective and depth. The motifs are spiral linear and geometrical. The colours are applied to achieve the needed visual simplicity. As can be seen, the rich blue that dominates the main work makes the work appealing and beautiful.



Plate XXIV: Title: Bend, Date: 2014, Artist: Dasok Y. Amos
Medium: Acrylic, **Size**: 75X45cm

The painting titled “bend” which artistically represents the bends that are common on our roads in Nigeria. Our roads are full of bends which poses a lot of danger to motorists, for instance the “kwanan maciji” (snake bend) at pankshin in plateau state. The bends are mostly snakelike in construction. This could be seen as an accident in design. This painting is an abstract work, rendered in acrylic and was executed on horizontal format form. The abstract painting is characterised by the use of curved lines. The composition is divided into two by light shade at the upper arm with a thick darker border. The lower part is rendered in light blue, green and red. The blue and red are complimentary in this composition of warm and cool colours.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of summary, conclusion, findings and recommendations of the study which have been drawn up and presented.

5.2 Summary

This research seeks to express ideas and natural themes in colour by exploring various ways of finding a pivot for personal expression in painting. The art works produced in the studio was rendered in abstraction, naturalism and splatter style. In the entire studio exploration, the research executed about 26 paintings in various stages. The painting shows a free sight talk about media findings, flow of brush strokes, splatter effects, rhythm, powerful hues and the easy manipulation of motifs to suit the purpose of the research up to the point of symbolizing shades and hues of colours that eventually metamorphose into total abstractions. In the same vein, some of the works are rendered less complicated as some appear elastic and rigid and geometrically treated to give an interpretation of the subject matter. On a whole, the paintings produced are end results of studio explorations carried out using patterns of the snake.

5.3 Findings

The studio work reveals that:

1. The surface patterns of snake are useful materials for artistic expression in that one can develop an expression that draws exclusively from line and patters of snakes.
2. Through systematic study and experience, the artist developed new creative ideas from patterns of the snake.
3. The researcher conceptualise the motifs derived from snake patterns into series of paintings.

5.4 Conclusion

The natural representation inspired by snake patterns can present the artist with a variety of forms and patterns with which creative transformation can be made worthy of public and individual consumption and appreciation. In essence, lines were manipulated to effect changes in some cases in the studio experiments.

The study observes that in certain parts of the snake texture, one can visually interpret and perceive images with organic look alike features. The works are tangible evidence that shows how the problem the study which appeared as though artists had no other ways of portraying the snake other than how it has been depicted over the years. Some of the issues raised touches on the socio-economic and political happenings. One of such is the issue of conflict resolution portrayed though the painting titled “dialogue” (see plate xii).

Conclusively, the research established that the inspiration drawn from decorative motifs of snake patterns are readily useful as elements for visual expression in painting and contemporary art as a whole. Generally, the research on this theme is quite challenging, tasking, cumbersome as well as an exciting creative experiment to the researcher and the connoisseurs.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Snakes are often feared by many but their patterns can be harnessed for artistic production or visual expressions.
2. A research of this nature should be encouraged by arts departments in Nigerian art schools in order to ensure the promotion and sustainability of the artistic tendencies that abound in nature.

3. Research into adaptations of motifs inspired by nature should be encouraged as this will open a new artistic expressing for artists in the bud.
4. Exhibitions and workshops should be encouraged, to foster unity among artists as this will motivate creativity and innovations derived from nature (flora and fauna). This will further strengthen the documentation and sustainability of contemporary Nigerian art.
5. There is need for Nigerian painters to be sensitized to manipulate existing forms of nature as an important source of inspiration which can stimulate artistic experience.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

The study:

i. Established an unending possibility enshrouded in exploration of principles of art such as balance and rhythm through fusion or juxtaposition of one or more snake motifs within the picture plane.
ii. Developed multiple visual forms through the creative merging of negative and positive space while contemplating the images of snake motifs.
iii. Established the interpretation of the basic elements of art (form, line, colour, texture and rhythm) as against the natural adaptation as part of design.

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APPENDIX A: Some Motifs Encountered (Pencil and Charcoal)





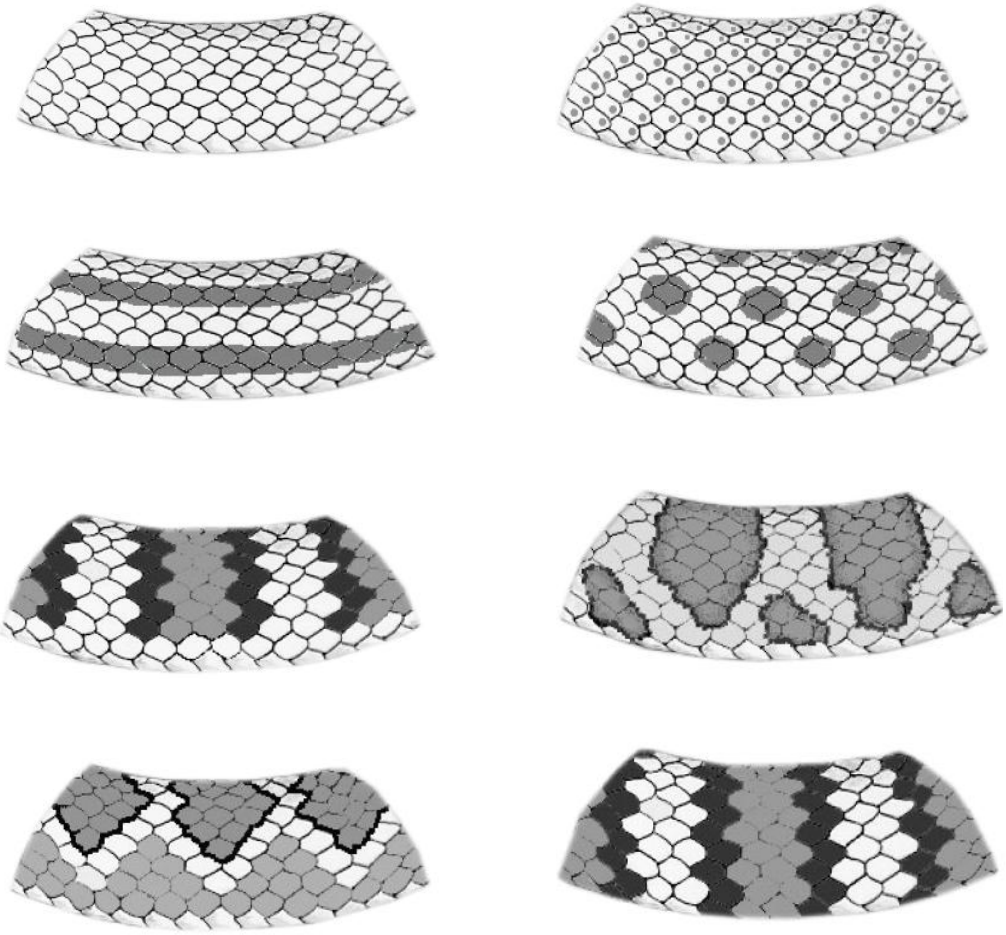








APPENDIX B: 8 Snake Patterns discovered



APPENDIX C: Live Snake Killed by the researcher (April, 2015).







APPENDIX D: Back Pattern Colouration for Snakes













APPENDIX E: Textures from Snake Patterns









