



Full Title of Thesis  
**An Exploration of Painting Aesthetics, Signs, Symbols, Motifs  
and Patterns of Coastal Yoruba Land of Nigeria**

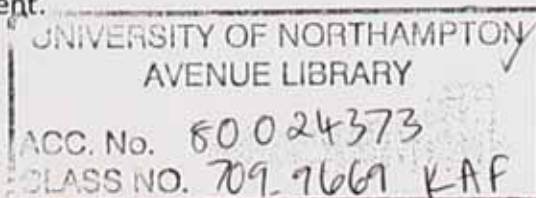
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At the University of Northampton

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**An Exploration of Painting Aesthetics, Signs, Symbols, Motifs and Patterns  
of the Coastal Yoruba Land of Nigeria**

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PG - 11402074

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## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research was carried out by Abiodun Babatunde **Kafaru** in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, The School of the Arts, The University of Northampton, United Kingdom.

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**Abiodun Kafaru**

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First Supervisor

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**Date**

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**Date**

## A DEDICATION

### To the Almighty God.

I would like to acknowledge the Almighty God for His grace and mercy in providing me with the opportunity to study in the United States. I would like to thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. [Name], for their love and support throughout my life. I would also like to thank my teachers and friends for their help and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank the Almighty God for His faithfulness and His love.

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## ABSTRACT

This research project is based on **action production** - a studio art practice involving painting and drawing. The different outcomes form the basis for identifying, investigating, analysing and documenting artistic tendencies found among the coastal Yoruba of Nigeria. The primary subject of research, namely, aesthetics, symbols, signs, patterns and motifs are drawn from Yoruba myths, folklore, legends and 'woodcarvings', some of which are similar to the abstract stylization found in modern European art. This study explores analytical cubism, avant-garde and Clive Bell's theory of aesthetic emotion and interrogates the pictorial characteristics, patterns, motifs, signs and artistic styles found among the indigeneous population of the coastal Yoruba areas of Nigeria. The resulting studio practice focuses on experimentation with lines, patterns, and the geometric shapes that seem to dominate Yoruba artistic forms and crafts such as woodcarving and adire (textile design). The research also seeks to interrogate forms and information found in the data or artefacts as basis for contextual analysis. The nature and number of paintings that constitute the studio practice component of the research are informed and determined by the research questions, through experimenting with analytical cubism, avant-garde and Bell's theory of aesthetic emotion, forms, materials, found objects and from work derived from the researcher's interpretations of designs, patterns, signs and motifs. The research project is thus, located within the broader context of contemporary Yoruba, Nigerian, and African art practices.

The research thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 sets out the background to the study, the theoretical framework as well as establishing the practice-based components and the research methodology, the scope and focus of the research and the action practice aspect. It also distinguishes the coastal Yoruba as a sub-group of the Yoruba, whose arts have not been explored or studied, and are sometimes mistaken for other sections of Yoruba society.

Chapter 2 discusses the history of Lagos State and the impact that centuries of contact with foreign (Europeans and Arabs) and other Nigerian cultures and Yoruba sub-groups such as the Benin and Ife groups, have had on the development of a distinctive artistic tradition among the coastal Yoruba. The history of Nigerian art

movements, examples of design motifs and patterns, their origins, functions and uses are examined through painting and drawing. The Chapter further explores how writers and art historians such as critics, art writers and explorers have contributed to discourse on art forms in Nigeria and on the African continent at large. Chapter 2 also analyses the location of coastal Yoruba artistic tradition within the body of global art movements and some of the thoughts surrounding Nigerian and African arts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in relation to whether they are original or part of western influences that started with colonialism. It discusses the emergence of Awori and coastal Yoruba arts as part of the culture of Lagos State from the first contact with the Benin kingdom in the later part of 15<sup>th</sup> Century and with the Europeans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and to the present. Chapter 3 discusses, analyses, and documents themes derived from the research studio practice. This section gives an in-depth description of the paintings and drawings of the patterns, symbols and aesthetics. The images found in this section are mapped using qualitative methods to highlight the materials and materiality of forms and styles, and the techniques adopted in the production of the images. This chapter goes beyond the description of the materials used it contextualises and discusses the materials used and explores notions of materiality beyond Nigerian and African art.

Chapter 4 draws on the signs, patterns, motifs and aesthetics of over thirty Yoruba designs. It focuses on the analysis of Yoruba iconographical images and words such as *Egungun* (masquerade), *Oro* (word), *Ohun* (voice) and provides a detailed analyses of their development as coastal Yoruba art motifs from ancient to contemporary times.

Chapter 5 details and concludes the experiments on subjects, styles, process and forms carried out in the studio. In principle the experiments have been mainly through immersive thinking and my personal exploration of coastal Yoruba artistic traditions. In the process, specific design patterns, signs and motifs have been investigated for their origins and meanings. Such an experimental approach was instrumental in my understanding of how coastal Yoruba art from indigenous pre-external contact forms contribute to the development of contemporary shapes and designs as well as helping to establish and locate my artistic activity within the broader framework of the wider Yoruba and Nigeria art. This investigation also helped in contextualising my own approach to space and time.

Chapter 6 concludes the research work, and equally captures the overall aims of the research. The chapter discusses the contributions of the research findings to knowledge. It proffers some arguments about what African art connotes, suggesting that the artworks used and analysed in the thesis should be examined in relation to the history and art of the coastal Yoruba people whose cultural values are distinctive among other arts in Nigeria and Africa.

### 1:01 Introduction

The concept and expression of power and beauty among the Yoruba and other ethnic groups of Nigeria and Africa are as diverse and multifaceted as the societies that populate Africa. Some cultures such as coastal Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo people of Nigeria believe that true power and beauty are spiritual in essence and not simply in physical outlook. Other ethnic sub-groups of the Yoruba such as Ife, Benin and Owo people believe that power is hereditary; the exclusive reserve of royalty and nobility, while the Igbo culture believes that raw power and physical beauty have the natural tendency to command respect and influence decisions, but impair judgement if abused and mismanaged (Adepegba, 1995).

The Igbo, Hausa and Nupe also believe that a person's position in life to some extent determines the kind and extent of power and aura he/she wields over others. The natures of hairstyle and headwear people put on in formal and informal social outings are determined by the cultural provisions of a people and as such vary from culture to culture. In Lagos State, the way and manner a person's headwear is designed or configured, conceived and decorated cannot be divorced from the aesthetic sensibilities of his or her people. In most cases, the outward look and physical appearance of a person do not determine their strengths and capability. Rather, these virtues are entrenched in the tradition and belief system of a people about what constitutes real beauty and character.

This is especially the case with the coastal Yoruba community and its cultural neighbours such as the Igbo, Hausa, Nupe and others. In Africa, art and culture are closely related; while culture is conceptual, art is tangible. Art is the projector of culture and while culture embodies a people's values and belief



systems, suffice to say that, African adornment is an aspect of African art, craft, design and aesthetics. African crafts are symbolical in nature and designed and commercial, sometimes they are made specifically for both personal and religious purposes, and are used to enhance physical appearances, social and ritual functions. According to Howwardena Pindel (Pindel, 1984, p.13) "adornment arts are executed to convey messages not only of beauty and sexual allure, but also of status, rank, age, tribal identification and aesthetics, as well as a state of mind or a desire to placate or seek protection from the environment". The concept of African adornments as used in this research, refer to the African's way of embellishing the human body and environment (architecture in particular) in order to create beauty that elates the senses, and to place value on somebody or something (Pindel, 1984, p.14).

The embellishment of the human body or environment cuts across board irrespective of sex, age or status and the everyday life of the people. Perhaps, it is this understanding that inspires both the functional nature of African arts and arts objects and Herskovits's classic description of art. Herskovits (2002) defines art as "the embellishment of ordinary living, achieved with competence and having a describable form" (Herskovits (2002) cited in Fajuyigbe, 2004, p.13). In other words, art is the creation of something or depiction of an activity involving skilled application by people to increase the worth of a thing or person through elaborate and skilful presentations. The coastal Yoruba people's adornments include ornaments (jewellery), woven fabrics, hairstyles, and headgears, and decorated swords, body paintings, pottery i.e. crockery and cooking utensils, decorations, ceremonial staffs, and wall murals.

The totality of the social-cultural, geographical and environmental conditions of a people impacts upon the popularity and uniqueness of the arts

commonly found in such a community. The artistic tendencies of the coastal Yoruba people are distinctive - they strive after natural effects and colour indicative of the nature of riverine locations, the results are quite different in character from the arts of other Yoruba sub-groups and other Nigerian ethnic groups, often emphasising a unique application of details and diversity of themes, forms and contents. While the kind of art found around the coastal Yoruba communities in Lagos State of Nigeria shares some special affinities with other Yoruba peoples living across Africa, the nature of their artwork is quite distinctive, symbolic and expressive in outlook. These attributes are based on the fact, that they occupy the mangrove areas and riverine islands, and the materials found in their environmental domain condition them to embrace the use of various indigenous materials such as raffia, palm fronds, plants, mud, and wood. The recourse to palm fronds by artists of *Agere* arts, as well as boat carving and mat weaving being the mainstay for people involved in *Eyo*, *Sangbeto* and *Efe* masquerades portray Yoruba tradition and is a true reflection of the artistic or cultural practices of the coastal Yoruba people. They indicate the relationship between economic activity, vocation and the type of art practised and produced by the community.

Among the Yoruba sub-groups of Nigeria, those residing in the coastal region have made robust artistic contributions to and influenced several artistes across other African cultures, with their life style, tradition and belief systems. These influences (iconographies) are reflected in the paintings of some artists who live mainly in Lagos, the majority of who have adopted the artistic styles of the coastal Yoruba land in their paintings. Among the arts of the coastal Yoruba is *Ijala* oral poetry, a living and dynamic verbal art that is colourfully practised all over Yoruba society but most especially by hunter guilds and by others guilds like farmers who

use iron implements. *Ijala* is symbolic of human-supernatural encounters and is meant to be sung, chanted, and intoned in performance in the presence of an audience at given social, religious, cultural, political or informal occasions. The art of *Ijala* music among the coastal Yoruba is expressive and reflected in the motifs of different artworks such as woodcarving, painting and pottery. The art itself is famous for its metaphorical expressions, musical form accompanied by structural repetitiveness. Like the *Ijala*, the design concepts and inspiration for all other Yoruba arts and performance arts derive their patterns, signs and composition from myths, folklore, histories and socio-cultural symbols of the people.

### **1:02 Aims of the Research**

The overall aims of this research are to critically investigate, shed light on and explore the creative patterns of the coastal Yoruba artistic tradition with a view to:

- (i) Investigate, establish and document the development of the contemporary coastal Yoruba of Nigeria artistic tradition from its indigenous roots.
- (ii) Investigate whether this artistic tradition and by implication contemporary African arts are unique, or imitations of western styles or the product of two artistic traditions and influences.

### **1:03 Objective of the study**

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives are set out. These are:

- (i) To explore the potentials of coastal Yoruba art forms with various painting mediums within the context of contemporary visual art;
- (ii) To examine the informing theories behind the paintings and drawings of coastal Yoruba land in Nigeria;

- (iii) To analyse and document the forms, meanings signs and artistic motifs in arts and crafts of Nigeria's coastal Yoruba with a view to eliciting the indigenous African thoughts behind them.

Since the aim of this study is to explore Signs, Symbols, Motifs and Patterns of the Coastal Yoruba Land of Nigeria, some terms such as craft, Eurocentric, avant-garde, genres, modernism, postcolonial and intercultural contexts and practices, etc., are used very loosely in this thesis. They are used mainly in their primarily functional contexts as art forms but most importantly, without any of the hegemonic, cultural, political and ideological connotations they carry in general art and literary discourses. I am aware of the potential misinterpretation this may give rise to and for this reason, will qualify and explain the terms in more details whenever I refer to them as critical or analytical categories.

#### **1:04 Lagos State Geography**

Lagos state is sandwiched by latitudes  $6^{\circ} 22'N$  and  $6^{\circ} 42'N$  and it straddles longitude  $2^{\circ} 42'E$  to  $4^{\circ} 20'E$ . The state is generally bound by the Atlantic Ocean in the South and in the North by Ogun State and in the East by Ondo State. It shares an international boundary of about 45 Kilometres with the Republic of Benin while the vast, deep blue Atlantic Ocean constitutes approximately 180 kilometres long Southern limit. It roughly resembles an inverse anvil (see map of Lagos state: plate 1), (Ajetunmobi, 2003). Lagos is one of eight Yoruba-speaking states in South-Western Nigeria and the economic and commercial nerve-centre of Nigeria and West Africa. It was for many years the colonial and post-independence capital of Nigeria before becoming one of the first 12 states when Nigeria was divided into a new administrative set-up in 1967 by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon.

## 1:05 Research Questions

The ancient arts, symbols, signs, and forms of the coastal Yoruba people have not been given close attention or explored, documented and interpreted in terms of meaning, signs and symbolism. In effect, the study and understanding of the region, its history and arts, especially its crafts, cultural value and oral poetry has been limited to minor references in a few studies of Yoruba society and culture (Lawal, 1984; Henry, 2004; Filani, 2006; Makanjuola, 2007). The visual arts, which abound in the area offer a significantly better medium for investigating coastal Yoruba arts, through paintings and drawings and thus, provide a clear theoretical and practical framework for understanding of forms, analysing, documenting and interrogating the signs, motifs and patterns of coastal Yoruba art for a wider global audience. This practice-based research, so designed and described as it is in the context of action research, is informed by four main considerations and questions.

- (i) What role does ancient practice of painting amount to in coastal Yoruba art?
- (ii) What happened to the idea of representing symbols, signs, and motifs in coastal Yoruba traditional arts (design)? Does anything unite those patterns and signs to the point we can describe coastal Yoruba art as a genre of Nigerian art?
- (iii) What is the effect of art history and ethnography in the understanding of contemporary coastal Yoruba art practice?
- (iv) What has caused the vast changes in Nigerian arts over the last centuries, and to what extent do local artistic traditions and practices such as those of coastal Yoruba art contribute to the development of Nigeria's art school?
- (v) What features do the coastal Yoruba art share with other Nigerian art forms such as Ife, Benin, Nok culture, and similar African art forms?

## 1:06 Background to the Study

As Filani (2005) has pointed out, Nigerian art landscapes have a lot of classifications with creative connotations that seem to reflect the distinctive hallmarks of ethnic artistic settings. This is to the effect that while each group of people explores and inspires each and other settings the several localities retain their distinctive artistic imprints. As a result, while the art forms reflect artistes' engagements with nature, their works are characterized by the synthesis of indigenous traditions such as motifs, patterns and western conventions such as perspective and proportion as propounded by Aina Onabolu and the Zarianists. In a way, while Yoruba artistic tradition focuses on such issues as power, role and social relations for which it emphasises the human head as the seat of political, social and ritual authority, for a long period of its history less emphasis has been given to other parts of the body in the development of Yoruba arts in general.

The emphasis on one part of the body over others has affected the nature and use of perspective and colours in indigenous coastal Yoruba art. Consequently, the functions of scale and proportion in the Yoruba art and society differ from what obtains in other parts of the world. However, the expression of modern art found among African and Nigerian contemporary artists at large apparently dates back to "Cubism" and to other 20<sup>th</sup> century art theories following the pioneering efforts of the likes of Picasso and Braque, which later extended their interest to other parts of the world including Africa. Soyinka (2010) argues that the critical connections between African and European arts actually started with the artistic movements inspired through the influences of colonialism.

Filani (2005) corroborates Soyinka's position, arguing that the dynamism of western education ushered in and informed artistic trends that also led to stylistic changes in indigenous African arts, including the process of acquiring artistic skills.

It is equally interesting to note that western influence was behind the teaching and experimental workshops like the *Mbari-Mbayo* in Oshogbo and *Ori-Olokun* at Ife Art workshop centres that were organised by colonial expatriates and ethnographers on Yoruba and Nigerian arts. All these were organised to help in disseminating artistic skills to art lovers and students whose talents would not have developed if the artists were limited to the basic elementary skills gained from their school days and from local apprenticeships. This initiative and workshop studio model produced such great artists as Jimoh Buraimoh, Muraino Oyelami and Twin-seven-seven, to mention just a few, who on their own were greatly influenced by the arts and creativity workshops organised by Europeans. As pointed out by Adeyemi (2011) Kenneth Murray's appearance on the Nigerian art scene became a pointer to, and a factor, that laid the foundation of what would later serve as basis for teaching visual art programmes in Nigerian schools. In addition to these, most African artists who evolved their practice with the onset of colonialism did so with European ideas married with traditional (idioms) art forms. Some of these artists among who are Jimoh Buraimoh and Muraino Oyelami sought to experiment with all kinds of materials, which in effect greatly helped to shape their sense of creativity.

Murray was able to inspire art apprentices and students in the area of what Egonwa (2011) characterises or refers to as the artistic desire to 'preserve' our culture and philosophy. Murray equally believed that, it was through the study of indigenous crafts and traditional arts that true contemporary Nigerian arts could evolve (Adeyemi, 2011). Thus, while this laid the early foundation for the beginning of contemporary Nigerian art a classic example of the integration of African and foreign influences in indigenous coastal Yoruba arts are the Chinese Caligraphical writings, and many motifs composed with infinite variety of

characteristics that bear the hallmark of western naturalistic representation (Adeyemi, 2008).

In the artworks of Nigerian artists, naturalism is noticeable in the way they express their themes and subjects. According to Nwoko (1978) (cited in Adeyemi 2011) Chinese tendencies are reflected through studio actions while some of these are knitted artistically in the works of Nigerian artist. This integration of indigenous old and foreign new, is specifically based on adaptation of traditional symbols and iconographies captured with brush drawings of cultural symbols, these are used as basis for representing objects of everyday life. However, the simplicity and directness of older African signs, symbols, motifs, and patterns have given a lot of inspiration to contemporary Nigerian arts and artists, individually and collectively as arts schools. The combined influences in the making of modern Nigerian arts and artists are evident in the works of such groups as the Zarianists who experiment with natural synthesis as we see in the works of Uche Okeke, Bruce Onabrakpeya and Yusuf Grillo to mention but a few. Another good example is the Ulism group of artists in south-east Nigeria, Onaism from south-west and Arewa from northern Nigeria. Each of these regional art schools has its own distinctive philosophy and artistic ideologies.

In coastal Yoruba, the primary artistic location and source for this study, the meanings of each of the signs, motifs and patterns used by artists derive from a combination of social, ritual and class symbols and the desire by artists to communicate both specific and cultural information in a special artistic hermetic language. The resulting art, although primarily imagistic and visual, can draw from one or more major cultural signs, patterns, and symbols of which there are very many. These symbols are predominant in the art works of coastal Yoruba people and are commonly found in ancient buildings in doorposts and woodcarvings. In



effect, a good number of the art objects in special places such as religious and political locations (shrine and palaces) constitute some form of metaphorical or symbolic narratives in which artists use indigenous forms of knowledge to communicate contemporary ideas, cultural wisdom, subjects and thoughts. Some of these signs and their meanings (Plate 2, p.177) can be used in a variety of ways and arts pieces, on their own or in combination with others.

The desire to explore the aesthetics, signs, symbols, motifs and patterns of the coastal Yoruba land of Nigeria can be explained in a number of related ways; first, as a craving for the unknown and the unfamiliar, secondly as a scholarly interest to explore patterns and symbols found in the artefacts, and thirdly as an timely scholarly exploration of the cultural identity and practices of the coastal Yoruba and their neighbours. This research project is thus, motivated by academic necessity and personal interest to investigate the artistic genres and aesthetics of a particular region of Nigeria, an action that will subject the artistic traditions of the coastal Yoruba land - Ikorodu, Awori, Egun and Epe to critical scrutiny and interrogation and bring about greater understanding and awareness of their features and patterns.

An examination of my own work (Plates 2, p.177 and 3, p.178) based on recurrent patterns, signs and motifs will reveal some of the features of the arts of the coastal Yoruba that this study intends to explore.

In these two pieces, I have consciously utilised fabric (*aso-oke*) design structure as basis, as theme and as sacred objects in this artwork to highlight what textile productions signify among the Yoruba people. Today, textiles production in Nigeria, has been greatly industrialized with the exception of indigenous woven

prints and types. In my approach, I have consciously used cool and warm colours, combined with basic patterns.

The two paintings explore *Ooya*, and *Sango* statue, old architectural forms and (*Ona-Ara*) designs, signs, motifs (*Ayo*) and aesthetics of Yoruba linear designs, characterised by varying effects and structure of colour fragmentation as vehicle to communicate the subject matter and 'Dialogue' between cultures such as *Ulism* and *Araism*. The effects and underlying concept reveal some of the inherent symbols and forms of Yoruba artistic practices. Art (*Ona*), as perceived by the Yoruba, has been variously classified and discussed by art scholars in recent times. For example, Adepegba (2000) has stressed the concept of arts as illustrated in Yoruba oral literature and mythology, arguing that art involves design or special form of skills or craftsmanship, propriety or decency, which could also mean beauty. This definition further suggests that most creative activities by skilled professionals especially those aimed at achieving beauty and aesthetics (and other purposes), amount to art among the Yoruba. Warburton (2003) states that painting is a form of art that helps to portray one environment in two-dimensional forms, as in the paintings described (Plates 2, p.177; 3, p.178). Warburton's observation suggests that the West shares some artistic practices and philosophy found in various African arts and other world cultures such as images based on Yoruba myths, scenes and symbolism.

### **1:07 Historical Overview of Coastal Yoruba Art**

The coastal Yoruba people of Nigeria found in Lagos State are distinct from other Yoruba sub-groups in their way of life and are equally known to be very creative in art and craft. However, they share so many artistic and cultural

practices with other Yoruba of Western Nigeria. Their history claims that they are one of the descendants of *Oduduwa*, with their origin traceable to Ile-Ife. The so-called Western coastal Yoruba occupy the coastal land of western Nigeria, the “*Eko*” area. They practice all forms of art and crafts, such as pottery, diverse mat weaving, blacksmithing often embellished with different patterns, colours, motifs, signs, and symbols. The coastal Yoruba indigenes have equally responded to the dynamics of change and continuity such that their distinctive cultural imprints have come in to play or emerge as a distinct form and cultural imprint within the framework of contemporary Nigerian art (Filani, 2005) (Ajetunmobi, 2003).

The painting, ‘Excitement’ (Plate 4, p.178) is an expression of form that depicts the peculiarity of Lagos social life style, the human anatomy and colour expression are soothing and captivating. The painting reflects the performativity and display that characterises the coastal Yoruba social life style. The arrangement and focal point are geometrical shapes derived through the conscious use of lines. The peculiar busy environment depicts people and the dynamic partying (*Owanbe*) among the people is revealed in this painting. This social partying or *Owanbe* is a feature of all public engagements and celebrations in Yoruba culture.

Filani (1997) once observed that the *Eko* or coastal Yoruba paint and express themselves in bright colours and display the subject and theme, forms, and skills for their arts through their distinguishing techniques. He concluded that the people at times reflect on the social life and themes relevant to their socio-cultural milieu. This research on Lagos coastal Yoruba art and its meaning and qualities is a pointer to the cultural and artistic uniqueness of the people among other ethnic groups and its place in a city that is symbolised and considered a dream home by many Africans. Lagos has been dubbed by social commentators in music and songs

as the centre of excellence, as a location it is vital to the economic and social well-being of Nigeria. It is the economic nerve centre of not only Nigeria but of all sub-Saharan African.

The city of Lagos is the capital of Lagos state. It is a multi-cultural setting blessed with more than an abundance of natural resources and is dotted with lakes, swamps and riverine boundaries separating it from Ogun State. Lagos state is sandwiched between coastal rivulets and the Atlantic Ocean. The coastal Yoruba land mass is characterized by all kinds of economic activities including commerce in fabrics and fish farming, while the lakes and swampy ground enhance massive production of crafts in palm fronds for different kinds of family and public uses and activities. Lagos has varied masquerades traditions; these are practised in each of the areas that constitute the state such as *Eyo*, *Igunuko*, *Sangbetto*, *Egungun* masquerades. These performance arts are supported by vast array of other arts and crafts and by implication have continued to influence many artists in Lagos and beyond.

Ariya (Plate 6, p.179), Merry-Maker reflects ethnic approach to public activities and the many adaptations across the arts which often transcend the borders of the Nigerian nation-state today (Filani, 2005). Where according to Okediji, (1999) the gorgeous exciting life style exhibited by the coastal Yoruba extends into Francophone Benin Republic, a development that was orchestrated by colonialism and the location of and trading with other Yoruba in Anglophone Nigeria.

The centrality of merry-making accompanied by lavish colourful dressing is also a feature of the practices and customs of other Yoruba sub-groups living in diaspora and in Africa. Colour expression in fabrics and all the other arts is therefore a very important aspect of Yoruba art. Colour plays an important part in

how the studio output from this research is organised. *Efe* and *Gelede* festivals are colourful and simultaneously celebrated in the format exemplified in the image (Plate 6, p.179). *Efe* celebrations according to Oyefolu (2003) are sometimes at night, a factor that explains my choice of dark tonal hue for the background in the painting. Despite the subdued night atmosphere and hue, the drummers' displays add colour and excitement to the occasion or festival. Oyefolu (2003) stresses that the main feature of *Efe* is the recitation of past historical phenomena (*Oriki*) belonging to a family, lineage or community, an activity that could potentially result in the display of genealogical history, which is relatively unknown or carefully hidden or forgotten by those affected.

The population of coastal Yoruba consists of rural dwellers and descendants of free returned former slaves, a lot of who held on to European ideologies. Both groups still share close iconographical relationship and connections with other Yoruba sub-groups in Nigeria (Adepegba, 2007 and Okediji, 1999, cited in Filani, 2005). Interestingly, the coastal Yoruba are also prolific in various other forms of art such as mat weaving, wall-decoration, *Gelede*-display, boat-regatta, pottery, weaving, embroidery, installation arts and fabric designing. The content, design and cultural motifs in these art forms have not been studied, which this research seeks to explore, analyse and document through paintings and drawings.

Contemporary artist, Kehinde Adepegba (2007), contends that other ethnic groups such as Benin and Nupe are good examples of people that have been influenced greatly by the contacts they had with the Yoruba thus corroborating, Bascom William's assertions, that the Yoruba are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, and equally one of the most productive in art (Adepegba, 2007). However, these artistic creations are so unique, and are intertwined with the myths and rituals of the people themselves, that Adepegba claims that the origin

of the Yoruba and their arts is very obscure and submerged in mythological stories as reflected by Holombe Bryce. According to Adepegba (2007, p.15):

*It is in the first millennium A.D. that we can place the origin of the elaborate economic, political and social structures, complex religious beliefs and renowned Art forms that rank their civilisation among the highest in West Africa.*

Viewed from the above submission, the cultural background of the Yoruba race are characterized by different cultural craft designs, some based on mythical and folkloric symbols and rituals, and on related historical incidents and developments. Majority of these can be said to be symbolic of interactions between people and their environments, they are elaborate and inspiring and date back to their very beginning as reflected in Williams (1963) and Adepegba (2007).

Williams (1963, p.17) observed that:

*Aside from archaeological terracotta and bronze heads and figures from the City of Ife, the Yoruba are most famous for their woodcarving. Additionally the Yoruba carve in ivory and bone and are still carving in stone In Ife when he [Murray] first visited in 1937-1938.*

They decorate calabashes with low relief carving, house walls with paintings of animals and geometrical design and metal with punch word design. They cast metal using the lost wax process, and forge metal into sculptural forms as well as make utilitarian crafts and objects including basketry, weaving, dyeing, embroidery, leatherwork, appliqué and beadwork. Both instances of historical information cited above (Williams, 1963 and Adepegba, 2007) demonstrate that the coastal Yoruba people from the onset and by implication explore and practice all other forms of art and design, in a way, revealing their elaborate, diverse social life style, belief system and normative structures.

The diverse cultural background and love for public celebrations have expanded the contexts, motifs and designs of their art forms. Ajetunmobi (1995),

cited in Adepegba (2007) claims that the western Nigerian - Yoruba sub-group is among the richest areas in terms of artistic collections and these artefacts rank successfully with other world art, and among the completely African content in terms of diversity, of quality design and structure with other great craft objects of high class elsewhere. Oyefolu (2003), cited in Ajetunmobi (2003) corroborates this assertion stating that the richness of Lagos indigenes in art forms is not limited to the reverie areas alone but equally extends to other sub-group of the upland area of Lagos State and its environs.

'Craft men' (Plate 8, p.180), is a representation of men who engage in musical craft, making Yoruba traditional instrument such as *Dundun*, *Bata*, *Omele*, *Sekere* and Gong. The painting depicts the nature of Yoruba communal setting especially the customs of flocking together in business activities and in merry-making. The Yoruba people are very musical. They are rich in the art of drumming. They have drums for various occasions. There are drums for daily activities; there are drums for social gatherings, drums for the *Oba* and drums for worship. For example, there are the *Igbin* set, *Dundun* set, *Bata* set and *Apinti* set. However, *Sekere* is a gourd covered with bead-like seeds in order to make the sound melodious. Cowries are used instead of hard fruits. Yoruba people have ritual drums such as the ones used for evoking ritual trances and rhythmic movements played by worshippers and acolytes in *Obatala's* shrines.

In size, *Obatala's* drums are much bigger than the drums for entertainment. The drums are so big and heavy that they are seldom removed from the shrine of *Obatala*. Indigenous "*Awo-Opa*" cultist and other idol worshippers also use the *Igbin* set. Another set is the *Ipese* set. This set is used by "*Awo-Ibile*" that is, the indigenous secret society. The *dundun* drum ensemble set is made up of many drums. In the set are two mother drums, one has what is called *Saworo* and the

other has no *Saworo*. Other drums in the set are *Akanran*, *Omole*, *Kankan* or *Kannango*, *Adamo* or *Gangan*. The latter is the popular talking drum. Also in the set is *Gudugudua* drum used for festival celebration. The “*Sango*” worshippers use the *Bata* set mostly in the daytime.

The set of drums in the painting includes two - *Iya-Ilu*. One is big and the other is moderate in size. Also in the set are *Omele*, *Omole-ako* and *Omole-abo* (male and female talking drum). Hunters use the *Apinti* drum. A good number of these drums rely on their tonal breadth and the dexterity of the drummer while the set that includes *Iya-Ilu* expresses words explicitly in lyric form. The set includes *Sekere*, sometimes used along with the Dundun set. Other drums are the *Aro* or *Agogo Ibile*, *Koso* and *Bembe* or *Ibembe*. See the above (Plate 7, p.179).

## **1:08 The Art of Awori, Badagry, Ijebu - From 1500 AD to the Present.**

There are a sizable number of discussions concerning the definition of ‘Art’. The word art has been defined from different perspectives and contexts. A wide array of such views has been considered and synthesised within my research paintings and drawings. In this research, I have looked at some specific Yoruba contexts surrounding the philosophy of art, with an emphasis on visual art in particular. I have considered how art is conceived in coastal Yoruba and extended this wherever relevant to a discussion of aspects of African visual arts. There are at least, three possible ways of addressing this issue. We may agree that a work of art is something created by an artist or any object that is aesthetically superior, that possesses certain qualities of visual appeal, or beauty and such qualities must have been purposely created by an artist. Every artistic piece is enhanced by the creative ingenuity exerted by the artists and present in them, both reflecting the



ability of the artist to conceive, 'create' and evolve something new and the consumer or observer to respond aesthetically to such artistic renditions.

Suffice to say that this theory is not what I have explored and deliberated on in this project. Even so, it is still a widely-held opinion of the general public, who in their own right think that visual appeal, or beauty is specifically something people can recognize (Gell, 1996). The second theory, the 'interpretive' theory states that with artworks 'aesthetic theory' does not justify the use of distinguishing external quality as exclusive rationalizations or the definition of an object as art. To this end, a work of art may not be beautiful or may even not possess any appeal to look at, but it may be a work of art if only it is conceived in the light of a concept of ideas grounded or rooted within an art history tradition. However, the advantage of or the acceptability of the 'interpretive theory' over the 'aesthetic' theory in this research is based on the fact that the former (interpretive theory), is dependent on the realities and context surrounding the making and reception of art in any given period or society especially as the contemporary art world has in recent time abandoned the creation of 'beautiful', while observing the making of pictures and sculptures in support of 'concept' art. In other words, a work of art is characterized by its value that delineates fluid time into knowable identities. By the mere fact of its creation, the artwork sets off a periodisation schema in reference to itself in spite of the insistent temporal character of time. The metaphysical nature of art remains one of arts overarching mission; hence, the discipline, art history. A concern of the researcher in this instance stems from the task of making meaning from and within an outlay of past artworks of the coastal Yoruba; how they fit into the realm of time when they were made, how they capture a particular historical and cultural experience and how they reference the past, present and future art in the society that owns it and

for whom it resonates. Art among the coastal Yoruba has always been concerned with beliefs, traditions, cultural and historical influences. However, a critical analysis of the few scholarly studies and huge body of works in the society suggest that coastal Yoruba art may be seen authentically as conceptual, functional and intentional in its own right, and not intuitive or produced simply based on impulse.

Art (*Ona*) as understood by the coastal Yoruba has been variously defined by Adepegba (1991) who opines that art is design or a special form, skill or craftsmanship, propriety or decency which could also mean beauty, for the images of the artist may be intended to be beautiful, innovative/novel and creative. This definition suggests that most creative activities by skilled professionals especially those whose objectives are to draw attention to some kind of beauty, draw attention and comment to form and aesthetics (and other purposes), are at least regarded as art among the coastal Yoruba.

In this respect, art then, is not about life situations, even when it is conceived to be. Most importantly and very crucial to the context of this research, is the idea of form, colour and of three-dimensional space (Bell, 2003) as used by the coastal Yoruba. Furthermore, Bell's argument can be specifically considered or configured into a functional phrase, 'Art, significance and form'. Thus, creative activities associated with art and craft in their widest ramification embraces form, context and process and may include woodcarving, stone carving, fashion design, costume and textile designs, pottery, shrine wall painting, weaving and embroidery, metal casting, and terracotta among others. In many cultures across Nigeria, art and crafts serve significant socio-cultural and traditional functions such as commemoration of historical and mythical incidents, certain festivals or funeral celebrations and social entertainments. Among the coastal Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria, woodcarvings, mat-weaving, shrine paintings, drumming,

*adire* (tie and dye) design and *Egungun* (masquerade) serve as powerful means of communication in religious, social, cultural contexts (Adepegba, 2007).

The adoption of everyday activities as artistic motifs and as communication tools among the coastal Yoruba has led to changes in how such tools are used, preserved and received, such changes are the results of developments of all forms of cultural variables ushered in by globalisation and western education. As Oyefolu (2003) pointed out, the normative pattern of any society, be it religious rites, information exchange system, modes of artistic production, or interactions with the people of other societies are built upon its cultural background. As such, a metropolitan society like Lagos State is not different. People from various sub-groups who are desperately in search of white-collar job, have sought to embrace the state for survival (Oyefolu, 2003). The sociocultural mix of Lagos State and its position within Nigeria and West Africa affects and shapes the arts scene; this is to the effect that as distinct as it is from other Nigerian and Yoruba ethnic sub-groups, coastal Yoruba arts is constantly exposed to changing circumstances.

## **1:09 Awori**

The artistic forms of the Awori people cut across all forms of crafts such as mat-weaving, pottery, cloth weaving, calabash decoration etc. This is not limited to those in the upland area of Lagos State, rather these arts practises can also be found among Awori indigenes in the riverine areas and creeks that make up the society and Lagos State (Oyefolu, 2003). Oyefolu (2003) stresses that, despite the prominence of Awori art throughout the state and beyond most of the people are farmers who employ rudimentary implements. Most of their arts and crafts are functional, and sometimes are used specifically to evoke the spirit of the soil for

fertility and workers' prosperity. The *Awori* is one of the major sub-groups of the coastal Yoruba. Its name, according to oral history, is derived from the legend of a floating ritual dish which *Ogunfuminire* their progenitor presumably followed from Ile-Ife down to *Isheri* (Ajetunmobi, 2003). Among other coastal Yoruba sub-groups, the *Awori* are believed to be the most creative and industrious.

They are well organised and have various artistic products that have been documented by historians and archaeologists, especially in the areas of mat weaving and pottery (Ajetunmobi, 2003). The products reflect the people's use of motifs, signs and patterns to communicate and comment upon the various socio-cultural and environmental influences on their locality. It is the variations and adaptations of these themes and socio-cultural influences that have made them popular inspirations for Nigerian artists such as Sam Ovrati, Kunle Adeyemi and Tola Wewe. It is interesting to state that the craft training in the various traditions and communities is specially designed and structured differently from all other forms of education. Training in arts and craft is specifically through lineage apprenticeships, a format where people employ or engage the services of a master artist or craftsman. The apprenticeship model of training and art development has historically been part of *Awori* and Yoruba art practice. *Awori* art is diverse and ranges from wood and fabric work such as *Adire* to performance and live arts such as *Egungun*, a form described by Oyefolu (2003) and Filani (2005) as the highpoint of a performative spectrum that stretches from drum ensembles to embroidery, and a form that mirrors the dynamic social scenes of Lagos and its arts scene. . The design and incisions on *Awori* art products represent their love for royalty and strength among their chiefs and sitting Kings. These motifs and patterns are zoomorphic and anthropomorphic in nature, and are vividly depicted especially on ritual staffs. The patterns and designs on royal staffs and the emphasis on river and

water motifs distinguish the art forms of the Awori from other Yoruba sub-groups because the *Awori* are known to worship the riverine goddess.

### **1:10 Ijebu**

The people of Ijebu have diverse sculptures, mainly anthropomorphic, which are similar to those of the nearby Epe people. Their art forms comprise mainly of carved boats and *Ere-Ibeji* statue; made mainly from limestone. The Ijebu are rich in art and crafts and have responded to the art of sculpting of traditional forms that cut across various animal representations such as *Ifa* divination-tray, *Ere-Ibeji*, and *Esu* statues in private homes, shrines, and public spaces. The people of Ikorodu and Epe, who are mainly Ijebu, produce woodcarvings and pottery. Ijebu art products are associated with numerous medicinal values and spiritual and cultic features. The makers are sometimes part time artists who only sculpt when a festival is approaching or during the coronation of an *Oba* (King) or the honouring of individuals with chieftaincy titles. Sometimes they produce masks for the Gelede festival as part of the entertainment and celebration of the benevolence of their local gods. The Ijebu ancestral carvings, among other Yoruba arts, are like citations in visual form and depending on the place, person and function, are a pictorial description and history about departed ancestors.

### **1:11 Badagry**

The Badagry people and their cultural imprints are very different from other sub-groups of coastal Yoruba of Lagos State. They practice lost wax processes and forge metal into sculptural forms. The Badagry people also engage in many crafts such as pottery, utilitarian objects, mats, basketry, traditional weaving, dyeing,

embroidery, leatherwork and bead work. Their *Satto* drums and *Sangbetto* masquerades are colourful and are decorated to reflect cultural signs and patterns, many of which reflect the fertility of the *Ogu* people of Lagos State. These trends are very entrenched but the people are also open to and welcome creative ideas from different sources and parts of the world, most especially from Europeans who throughout Nigeria's colonial period lived and work within their community.

*Egun* people of Badagry by all standards are very creative, their involvement in textile art production dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier when the various guilds of weavers who engage in various forms of textile and crafts were first formed. Badagry drums are to be found in various sizes and forms, representing features of male and female essences and used during cultural festivals. The *Egun* people are descendants of the Yoruba who migrated from Whydah, Allada, and Weme which are now parts of the Republic of Benin. *Egun* cultural influences of speaking people extends to Republic of Benin and dates back to the migration of early founders of the Yoruba of Dahomey before and after 1900 century A. D (Ajetunmobi, 2003). The *Egun* have distinctive and colourful art products such as *Satto*, the art of boat carving, mat weaving, craft decorations and fish farming. Their arts, patterns and motifs are symbolic and unlike hinterland Yoruba who share cultural affinities with the Yoruba of neighbouring country of Benin republic, they are distinctive from the arts of the indigenous population in western Nigeria and Benin republic.

### **1:12 Coastal Yoruba Culture**

Over time, scholars across discipline in arts, social sciences and humanities have defined or perceived culture from various perspectives and to a great extent,

culture and art are interwoven and inseparable. Edward Taylor (1832-1917) (in Oyefolu, 2003, p.17) defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, customs, laws and other capabilities including tools acquired by man for daily survival while the non-materials are knowledge about the nature and all the rules guiding the interaction of people in the society”. However, the system and beliefs of any given society are best expressed or viewed alongside its art forms and in cultural values. *Ona* (art) and *Ara* (creativity) are the words used by the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria to describe artistic concepts and art forms, which the Yoruba people are believed to have been pre-occupied with as far back as the eleventh century A.D. (Adepegba, 2000). The coastal Yoruba are distinctive among other sub-groups found within sub-Saharan Africa, their urban lifestyle is unique and characterized by complex cultural and political systems (Adepegba, 2007).

This research seeks to explore, interrogate and document the art of coastal Yoruba people through paintings and drawings within the context of contemporary art. A critical look at the art forms shows that their social systems and geographical features are similar in nature to other Yoruba sub-groups. In his book titled: *Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Art*, Adepegba asserts that more than any other sub-group, the coastal Yoruba are blessed with various materials that have enabled them to explore diverse art practices for ages. In his words, the worldview of the Yoruba, their diverse and complex socio-religious life-styles and their kinship system have helped their arts to thrive (Adepegba, 2007). Adepegba further argues that the coastal Yoruba are unique in most of their craft designs, which is among the richest of the African continent.

Water and oceans surround the people. However, the river aptly maps the persistent problem of environmental in Lagos State. Although the physical

environment plays its part in especially the contents and materials used, other important influences on coastal Yoruba arts are history, myths, storytelling, legends and folklore. These sources add anything from content, subject, theme and context to patterns and design motifs in coastal Yoruba arts tradition. Akeusola (2003, p.27) for example, has noted that, "the African traditional story tellers such as the Yoruba have their novel form in the folktales and, "*Alo-apagbe Yoruba*" fiction. He further adds that poetry to the Yoruba evolved from the Ifa verse, *Oriki*, *Ekun*, *Iyawo*, etc. However, the theatrical or the dramatic aspects of Yoruba culture are reflected in the feature of *Egungun* (masquerade) such as *Egun Alare*, *Isipa Ode*. This study focuses on the signs, motifs, patterns, subjects and contents of coastal Yoruba arts as rendered and as thermalised in its performance and plastic arts from such as oral poetry, mat-weaving, *Egungun* masquerade, *Awo-art* (cult-art), *Ijala*, poetry and adire (textile design). These art forms and their motifs and signs are rendered in brass, wood, and Ivory and plant products such as cotton/textile, calabash and raffia.

The influence of the coastal Yoruba art and its rendition in sculptural forms is most especially evident in ritual sculptures among the Nupe, *Tsoede* bronzes the Essie stone images, *Owo* terracotta and Benin sculptures in brass, wood and ivory. According to Adepegba (1995), the coastal Yoruba myth of origin equally linked the coastal people to the Ile-Ife autochthonous version of the *Oduduwa* legend and the Oyo and Ijebu versions, which claim emigration of a legendary ancestor into Yoruba land from the direction of Egypt in the case of the Oyo and *Wadai* in the case of the Ijebu. Some local versions of myth of origin even claim that the leaders of the emigrants from the Middle East were white skinned or *Malatto* (Adepegba, 1995, p.14).



Both the *Adire* and mat weaving constitute an art of the women folks in Yoruba culture, which provide them with economic independence, and a means of expression. However, the different migration myths and involvement of women at domestic and public levels have led to divergent reactions of styles in *adire* production. *Adire*, (textile design) a product of Yoruba dyed fabric, is produced with indigenous technology and materials (ropes, indigo dyes, and mordant) as an integral part of Yoruba culture, it is very distinctive of the culture like the talking drums. *Adire* design expresses Yoruba traditional culture, *adire* takes its roots from the two Yoruba verbs “*di*” meaning to tie and “*re*” meaning to dye. Hence, it is a compound Yoruba verb meaning to tie and dye (Makinde, 2004). The people’s cultural identity is distinctive, and their arts vary according to techniques whether this is deployed to the making of sculpture, mat weaving and boat carving. As indicated above, the style expressed is often idealised with symbols in zoomorphic form using diverse material substances, which are partly ephemeral in nature.

The Yoruba of south-western Nigeria adopt dyeing as a technique or a means of artistic embellishment for their traditional hand woven fabric (*Fu or Kijipa*), the main purpose of which is to infuse into the fabrics certain aesthetic qualities and virtues reflective of motifs, patterns, technique of production, ornamentation, colour; and an overall expression of worth. In the past the use of Yoruba dyed fabric, *adire*, was limited to apparel and clothing used during festivals and ceremonies among the Yoruba (Makinde, 2004). However, due to acculturation through trade contacts, and improvised technology, it is in use in recent times for other decorative and functional purposes such as celebrating important festival and social outings. Interestingly, from the twentieth century to date, *adire* has undergone a series of transformations and changes in visual outlook and status. These changes are brought about because of improved technology and availability

of dyes, chemicals and imported fabrics such as guinea brocade from India and Europe.

Oyefolu (2003, p.10) defines *adire* as the Yoruba traditional resist cloth dyed in indigo, a favourite blue colour of the Yoruba''. Makinde (2004) submits that the early *adire* fabrics were made from hand-spun and hand-woven cotton materials. *Adire* (textile) has a long history and tradition of passing from one generation to the other. It used to be in varieties of indigo blue shades with a characteristic odour that confirms its authenticity and originality. Makinde (2004, p. 22) remarks that with the introduction of chemical dyes into the Nigerian market in 1920 and with an improved contemporary technology, a new ground was prepared for the artists which enabled them to produce *Adire* in different shades of green, violet and browns''.

### **1:13 Justification for the Study**

Existing research on Yoruba culture and art (Ajetunmobi, 1995) do not recognize the coastal region as a distinct Yoruba sub-group yet evidences from arts, myths and legends suggest otherwise. However, Ajetunmobi's (2003) later study makes the claim that their arts, traditions, rituals and performances distinguish the coastal Yoruba as a distinct sub-group of the Yoruba. Ajetunmobi's study (2003) has now been acclaimed for its historical authenticity, thus by implication, making the coastal Yoruba one of the most advanced communities in Nigeria that is still without a proper articulation and study of its arts forms. Some of the artistic forms that are distinct and localised in the region are the *Eyo* masquerade, *Igunuko mask*, *Egungun*, *Gelede*, *Sangbetto* and myths and legends such as those surrounding the *Satto* (spiritual drum). This study will complement

Ajetunmobi's cultural history and unearth the artistic contributions of the coastal region to Yoruba and Nigerian art history, culture and society.

The neglect of contemporary art forms in Nigeria and Africa before 1960 was absolutely in keeping with the then prevailing colonial view of traditional arts as primitive, basic and unworthy of scholarly attention. However, this neglect has also been the product of the widespread misconception that contemporary African culture is a distorted copy of western culture, and therefore lacks authenticity (Ajetunmobi, 1995). In the eyes of some commentators and critics, the contact with western culture is seen as a source of decay and indeed laid the basis for the extinction of Africa's great traditional arts (Adepegba, 1995).

It is therefore necessary to correct the misconception that Nigerian artistic expression is simply a copy or pastiche of western art. It is also expedient to understand how the coastal Yoruba of Nigeria explore African philosophical thoughts, crafts and their environment as source and inspiration for how their arts are expressed such as through sculpture, painting, wood-carving, through crafts such as mat-making, body-painting and scarification, fabric designs and use of colours, and in the performance arts such as *Eyo* masquerade, *Igunuko* mask, *Egungun*, *Gelede*, and *Sangbetto*. The crafts and performances are very colourful forms with many inscriptions, which bear the patterns, designs and motifs of their socio-cultural contexts and ritual meanings.

It is equally pertinent to explore, and document the inherent themes, symbols, signs, patterns, motifs, and artistic experience of the coastal Yoruba socio-cultural resources and materials for further discussion by students, scholars and art historians at large. This study is in general, also informed by the need to extend critical scholarship and investigation to an under-studied and under-

represented cultural art tradition and to contribute to the continually expanding discourse in Nigerian and African art schools.

### **1:14 Scope of the Study**

This studio-based research is limited to an exploration of the aesthetics, signs, symbols, motifs, and patterns of the coastal Yoruba (Lagos State) of Nigeria and their potential links with other Nigerian, African and Western art ideologies such as Cubism and *Avant-Garde*. As a result, the project will explore the nature and logic of coastal Yoruba symbolism and motifs, while at the same time interrogating the means through which coastal Yoruba cultural heritage and identity are preserved in art. It will look at some specific contexts in which modernism as a vanguard is viewed and integrated in Nigeria and African visual arts and as a temporal definition in the cultural productions that have influenced coastal Yoruba art forms. The resulting studio practice, as a paradigm shift, will be explored, contextualized and documented as the basis of analysis and interpretation of coastal Yoruba patterns, signs and motifs.

### **1:15 Research Methodologies**

This study will involve practice led or studio-based research experimentation. An action research method that brings together theory, research and practice will be involved. The process involves reflection, interpretation, and responsiveness to changes and with a view to new interpretation of indigenous coastal Yoruba patterns, signs and motifs. Thus, experiences, improvisation and experimentation are methodologies that play a central role within the project.

❖ **Practical Investigation:** The dialogue that has been happening between western and African artists since Cubism e.g. Picasso looking at African art forms and then the African artists looking at western arts style' such as realism (e.g. Picasso) and how this is interpreted will be investigated in the researcher's art practice. The reflection, dialogues and interpretations coming back and forth between western and modern Nigerian arts - will be investigated, and documented through creative processes in drawings and paintings.

Through drawings and paintings, I will use indigenous coastal Yoruba art and verbal art to investigate traditional and modern arts and crafts in Nigeria, (which were both influenced by local traditions and western reactions to them). I will then investigate, again through drawings and paintings, if and how the stylistic trends of modern western arts such as 'cubism' has influenced Nigerian and African arts. The study will analyse the creative patterns, signs, and motifs of coastal Yoruba art with a view to addressing issues of originality, authorship and interpretation. As a new generation artist, I will experiment with new design motifs, with found objects, mixed media and interpretations, processes etc. It is hoped that, through an analysis of creative patterns, signs, and motifs, I will produce a unique interpretation of coastal Yoruba art addressing issues of originality and authorship. The process will hopefully create a new art form and designs based on the artistic dialogue that has been happening globally since the 20th century and interrogate how this has influenced modern Nigerian and African art.

The qualitative instruments that this study uses as template include composed sketches, photographs, oral-illustrations, observation and interrogation of relevant literature.

- ❖ **Observation:** This object-centred approach encourages deep contemplation, deep observation of artworks, and behaviour of materials in use especially when combined with found objects which has rarely been so powerful and resonant, yet this action exhibited while in the studio, coupled with other forms of materials further helped during practical exploration (Adeyemi, 2012).
- ❖ **Literature:** Relevant literature on history of painting and cultural studies were analysed and consulted early before start the project. The researcher sought and reviewed archival materials both in Nigeria and in Northampton through the library, internet, related journals, art books, magazines and newspapers. The search for literary materials extended further while looking at traditions of Western painting and the approaches of the different Nigerian arts schools, *Mbari*, *Ona*, and *Zarianist*. Despite the apparent radical shift or departure by many Nigerian and Yoruba artists towards abstraction, all these were looked at and provided important information and historical evidences, as well as in interrogating some art practices and the practical implications of Bell's theory of art, on coastal Yoruba art.

I consider how the artworks produced in this research would be approached and grounded based on Collingwood theoretical view that art simply is another kind of craft. Collingwood recognises no distinction between art and craft. Collingwood was important in my pre-occupation with the task of transforming wood, newsprint and fabric (raw material) into art and effect, contextualising the studio practice and resulting artefacts appropriately

since any kind of object which portrays some kinds of effects (Bell, 2003) is art. One of the aesthetic choices resulting from the combination of Collingwood (1958) and Bell is the exploration and re-creation of, and the design and production of paintings and drawings using found object.

Bell's aesthetics theory became the theoretical basis for analysing arts and crafts, and the latter as forms of the former. This theoretical approach is a conceptual departure and a new way of reading coastal Yoruba art. The abstract renditions in this project are intentional as abstract art now stands in contradistinction to erstwhile traditions of Euro/American art, which the classical cultures of Greece and Rome ushered as realistic art. While the above approach and summation are both reinforced by Howard Risatti's (2000) comments that, the term modern was not identified with whatever art was created at the time except such works that negated Europe's traditions of realistic art. Habermas (1990) notes, however that these works and artists which valued qualities of modernism, especially the avant-garde culture, first became compromised by the Dada and Surrealistic movements through their experiments. Harbermas' thesis was the point at which modernity as a project began openly to show some element of and warning signs of a detachment from its original goal. The avant-garde doctrine of Western modernism is the theoretical ground for explaining and interrogating the concepts of modernism and development in this research, as it is explicitly reflected in the arts in general. By valorising avant-garde "modernism" placed value on the mystique of stylistic successions, which customarily aided the determination of changes that occur in time and space. In other words, the vanguard and the avant-garde actively initiated a succession of and characterization of artistic styles, with

a gaze in which every new form was deemed futuristic about every style it succeeded. Such a view of progress towards a telos invariably resulted or foisted forced notions of closures on previous styles that were once acclaimed as modern. The modern and contemporary with regards to coastal Yoruba arts traditions can thus be dated to Nigeria's independence in 1960 and the birth of post colonialism which ended one form of gaze and worldview. This event ushered in a new way of looking at the country's indigenous cultures and arts and coincided with the post WW2 period when the rest of the world was also thinking of modernism from a similar point of view.

- ❖ **Interview:** A cross section of artists, art historians, art managers, painters and sculptors were interviewed on their experiences and understanding of the arts of the coastal Yoruba. The researcher to help in the area of identifying and analysing of the symbols and patterns adopted face-to-face interview format.

## **1: 16      Significance of the Study**

The research paintings and drawings (experimentation) from this research will help to free many budding artists of preconceptions about Nigeria's and Africa's traditional arts, inspire younger generations of academics, scholars and practising (studio) artists thereby creating avenue for further research. It will introduce a radical shift, and positive re-invigoration of the arts scene such as '*Lagos contemporary art*', a local art movement with a spasmodic process of experiments whose objective is to inspire and inject fresh ideas into contemporary Nigerian arts using post-modernist approaches. This study will also sustain and



further increase dynamism in the practice of studio painting in Nigeria and stimulate practitioners of other genre of art (textile, photography, sculpture, graphics, printmaking, and ceramics, etc.).

The creation of quality paintings and drawings and development of approaches and new styles of painting in this research will be analysed and documented. As anticipated, an in-depth understanding through personal studio yielded invaluable information and led to a deep knowledge of the nature, forms, and patterns inherent in the arts and crafts of coastal Yoruba. The study will highlight the uniqueness of coastal Yoruba art, crafts and design sensibility and the wide-ranging scope of artistic practice in Nigerian and African arts. It will contribute to better understanding and appreciation of the culture of coastal Yoruba artistic tradition. This is with a view to identifying the principles of proportion, design structure and the concept of realities which have not only resulted in a continuous recreation of forms and styles - but which sustain the rich artistic legacy of the coastal Yoruba.

It is hoped that this kind of study might assimilate itself into a more complete historical plan and lay a very solid philosophical foundation and resilience in the Nigerian and African art landscape. However, it may also open new discoveries in the face of local artistic practice and output as well as provide a template and visual information for analysing and interrogating of all the Yoruba artistic form.

## 2:1 Review of Literature

## 2:2 Introduction

The study of art and its historical antecedents have greatly helped to inform the nature of artists and their works, and as we have seen, great art work remains stable and unobscure because the feelings that it arouses are quite independent of time and place. Elsen, cited in (Filani, 2005, p.136) posits “that students of art should recognize that an intelligent appreciation of creative activity must proceed from perspectives and sources such as philosophical and aesthetic premises of the time, and particularly consider actions such as working methods, patronage system and the surrounding socio-cultural circumstances that inspire and influence artists and lovers of art”. All of these factors are usually predicated on the prevalent socio-cultural milieu of a society such as the coastal Yoruba, the subject of this study. In the same vein, visual art and plastic art all over the world have witnessed tremendous changes during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in many instances it has led to the creation of seminal and culturally significant pieces but mainly, in the development of academic discourses.

Thus far, few scholars, critics, artists and philosophers have offered substantial arguments and counter arguments on the subjects and context of Nigerian arts. Shannon Fitzgerald (1999) provides one of the rationalisations on which the denial of African modernity is premised. And this is apart from the quaint ontological argument that Africa is at the infancy of human development. Close examination of the fictional constructs that have been applied to Africa has revealed the faulty expectations put on African artists and the art they produce.

That the works of Nigerian and African artists have been noted to share some of the characteristics of arts regarded and understood as Western is neither a betrayal of their Africaness nor a privilege of Western influence. If anything, these similarities, rather than reduct the significance of any art to its primary and global audiences, suggests a reciprocal exchange of ideas and merging of strategies, where the either or polarity and West versus *other* dichotomy and constructs dissolve.

Fitzgerald's (1999) thought extends and further responds to previous portrayals of modern African art as fictitious because they contradict and challenge expectations prescribed by Western institutions of art history and criticism. The contention in such hegemonic western-dominated views of modernism then is that modern art in Africa remains simply a parody of Euro-American art styles. This view of modern Africa is far from being correct, for even as the hybrids of different historical and cultural epochs (pre-colonial, anti-colonial and postcolonial), their denigration as western art parodies points more towards misinterpretation than to actual creativity. This projection of Western thought simply demands that authentic African art that could be distinguished as modern must conform to conceptual styles that dominated artistic practice before contemporary modernity and should be seen to exhibit dexterous "primitivism". Interestingly, art history's embrace of alternative theories of art, aesthetic and beauty, and advancement to the status of World of Art opens a way for critical enquiries regarding the historical nature of African art. Keith Moxey (1990) has argued that engaging theory in art historiography is one sure way of looking again at the nature of history as the fabrication of metaphysical narratives. Moxley's suggestion opens the way for theoretical alternatives of the kind proposed by Kimmerie on inter-culturality and mutual respect.

While such a relationship already governs the inter-relations between different indigenous art traditions in Africa (and in Europe), it is the appropriate foundation through which the arts of different coastal and mainland Yoruba cultures extend respect to one another while addressing their uniqueness in time and space.

The way innovation/novelty and avant-garde are made into fetish for addressing dialectical opposition between ancient and modernity materializations where they do not exist and where changes from one approach to another, in time and space, is a logical consequence of progress through culture and time. The former view or position does not apply to the reading of these terms in coastal Yoruba art. The view or approach adopted is one that historicizes the visual arts of Euro-American and African traditions equally and which considers inter-culturality as neither a new concept nor something limited to any one society since all cultures are of the same age, just as their philosophies are of the same value. Consequently, while epochs, histories, criticism and exposure to various alien ideas and materials have helped to foreground this research the researcher has also sought to free this project from certain inherited approaches while working in the studio, exploring forms and at the same time creating a vocabulary of patterns, espousing on unique motifs and of epistemologies of paintings and drawings done in the twentieth century.

Suffice to say that, historically and culturally the changes that affect artists' ideas of training in art practice, are two folds. Firstly artists have always sought to reject conventions for a craving for ideas and information that emanate from their own visual experience and which according to Sausmarez, seem valid for us as our expressive resources (Sausmarez, 2002).

Secondly, the information gathered from the researchers materials' and their specific functioning is very crucial, in defining and informing individual practice. Similarly, historical accounts of art practice at the turn of the 20th century and art movements dymistify the delineation of intentions, theories and simplifying art labels, and at the same time urshered in new visions of self-reflectiveness, contradictoriness, richness characterised by relentless agitation for individual expressiveness (Stangos, 2012). Some art movements and theorists such as Bell, Coollingwood and Cubists to mention just a few have attempted to scrutinize or had invariably delineated the discourses within the context of definition, simplification of forms, "signification of forms", "technical theory" and "aesthetics emotion" (Warburton, 2003) which are subjected to criticism to some degree by the formalists and the aestheticians.

In addition to all these trends that took the centre stage of art practices globally the art movements were concurrently reflecting all sorts of attitudes exhibited by artists, and the notion then was to liberate a free means of vision which then, offers freedom of expression and speech; this in effect helps to crystallize the intrinsic elements of concepts in a new order. As Stangos (2012, p.9) notes, however art critics, aestheticians and art historians were more engaged in modifying, and influencing artists, and at the same time helped to shape the idea of modernism. This, to some extent has informed approaches to criticism to day. Art movements were intentional, purposeful, directed and programmed from the start. They were accompanied by declarations, manifestos and a plethora of documents. Each movement was deliberately launched to make a point; artists and often critics, and artists as critics, formed platforms to lunch movements, to proclaim concepts.

The development of all these styles or movements such as modernism and post-modernism 'styles' as proclaimed by the theoreticians and art-historians and philosophers were regarded as signs of progression and development in the history of humankind.

The cumulative effect of all these events happened within the purview of European contemporary life such as the "avant-garde" liberated people from the conventions of formalism and classicism. This of course, later extended to other artists in Africa and Asia which has enabled this researcher to reflect on and synthesis theories and intuitions as a basis for the theoretical framework in this research on coastal Yoruba arts, an approach developed by various Nigerians like other Africans who sought to liberate themselves from the dogmas of the formalist. The supposition that Western modernity from Harbermas' exposition makes it explicit and evident that African modernity is and should be constructed on a different hypothesis is contestable. The assertions regarding African modernity are more rooted in inclusive modernism. This is why this research has avoided these polarities by focusing instead, on any one or a combination of approaches, styles and methodologies to inform practice. Where the results have huge common cultural imprints such as the coastal Yoruba the arts can be read as such or through the interrogation of its patterns, signs and motifs as was used in studio practice in this research.

I thus engage with and adopt the premise and claims that have been put forward for African cultural modernism. In African art history we encounter periodisation schema, which are products of diverse ideological leanings, which are either Afrocentric or Eurocentric. Dominant Eurocentric views cut out a two-tier periodization schema for African art - the traditional and contemporary succession. They have had great influence in academic debates and traditions of

art in Africa. Willet (1975) typifies this schema - the term traditional rather discusses African art in terms of a fictional, unchanging world. The other arguments about the nature of African modernity and Willet's distinction of traditional as a fixed, unchanging entity serve the purpose and objective of this research. The reason for this approach is clear; the former for their absence of dialectical oppositions (Willet, 1975), the latter for stating what post-independence, postcolonial, contemporary period African art and the subject of this research, is not. The African modern art implied throughout this thesis is one that reflects on and explores traditional artefacts in new ways or forms and with new media or material culture (Adepegba, 1995).

This practice-based project on coastal Yoruba art, has sought to utilise several materials and by implication, it has changed tremendously in the light of coastal Yoruba, Yoruba and Nigerian histories. These histories and in some respect this study, can be seen as a response to prevailing historical and intellectual conditions. Rather than use the old materials, the studio materials have been expanded beyond the scope of what is found around Northampton. Most of the materials are newsprints, sand, fabric and textile materials which make the paintings very attractive, while others are industrial products, except in the exploration of mixed media where I have extended into natural materials such as sand, wood and rope.

I have explored how painting can be seen through mixed media, improvisation and newsprint. This research has also looked into innovative ways of looking at art that have preoccupied African and European thinkers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The emergence of all these innovations happening at the tail end of the twentieth century has led on to examining the fictional constructs that have been applied to African art, this has revealed the

faulty expectation put on African artists and the art they produce. That their work shares characteristics understood as Western is neither a betrayal of their Africanness nor a privileging of Western influence; rather such shared characteristics hint at a reciprocal exchange of ideas and merging of strategies, where the 'either or' dichotomy dissolves.

The art biennial tradition has developed in many ways and directions since its inception as a cultural platform where novel tendencies in art practice from many parts of the globe are exhibited and shared. However, how this is understood and practiced varies depending on scope and place. One important outcome of the biennial tradition in terms of knowledge, is an understanding of how global art producing communities are indebted to each other, yet, in a diversity that is stunning. In the case of Africa for example, the Darkar art biennial, a co-opted cultural platform, has offered African artists an important platform to meet within the frame work of shared identity.

Conscious of the theoretical alternative I have been persuaded by the views of Filani on inter-culturality and that mutual respect for cultures should extend to one another while addressing their uniqueness in time and space. The way "innovation/novelty" and "avant-garde" (Ogiomoh, 2013) is made into fetish while historicizing the visual arts of Euro-American traditions whilst denying other cultures the status of newness come against the expectations of inter-culturality.

The above rational lends credence to cultural modernity as a feature of all cultures in coastal Yoruba and Nigeria. Even the contemporary artists in Africa now engage and experiment with new media and materials, the results of which include installation, video art, internet art and other formats that are exclusively new. Consequently, talented and hard working artists have started to evolve new ways of artistic exploration, employing and integrating styles from elsewhere such as



“aesthetic theory” and a combination of African European, and Asian concepts of vision and ideology but with nothing of the hegemonic relations of their political postures.

African artists and arts now enjoy various sites for the unveiling of innovative and modern artistic forms to international audiences outside and within Africa (Filani, 1997, p.4). For instance, as noted in Filani “the Dakar Biennale, the Johannesburg Biennale, the Bamako Biennale, and lately the Abuja *ARESUVA* (Visual Art Summit) and Benin Biennale, have now grown to become platforms for international creative display within the African continent” (Filani, 1997, p.7). Many prominent African artists, both old and young who are very committed to their art practice who reside in Africa and diaspora are given the opportunity to exhibit and discuss their arts during Biennales in Western countries. These platforms have helped to promote the art of many African countries outside their geographical and artistic boundaries. This has also generated a profound art-historical approach to the study of contemporary art in Africa and beyond. For example some modernist artists such as Warburton (2003, p.4) and Bell (2003) have in different ways noted significance of form as a feature of art and that the power of creating significant form depends, not on hawklike vision, but on some curious mental and emotional power. Even to copy a picture one needs, not to see as a trained observer, but to feel as an artist. This new approach to how to look at the arts is taken up by the academic artists who either trained abroad or in Africa in early and up to the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century.

They however, rebelled against the domination of Western theorists and insisted on being acknowledged on the same broad terms with their foreign counterparts and argued their case through a series of efforts including writings on art. Such artists include Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan, Ben Enwoku and the

Zarianist artists such as Uche Okeke, Bruce Onabrakpeya, Demas Nwoko and Yusuf Grillo (Filani, 2005). Despite the different philosophies styles and ideas, Bell's theory of 'formalism' was simply postulated and foregrounded on common "line" and "logic". Although African artists do not in principle, reject or champion Bell's formalism from a cultural point of view, they resort to resist formalist prescriptions from a purely functional perspective and with regards to what they do or do not contribute to their practices. The approach followed by the Nigerian artists stated above is in accordance with Africa's essentially functionalist view of art in which styles and forms may co-exists for as long as they serve the artist's vision and goal and as far as the combination of material and process produce the desired aesthetic emotion. After all as Christopher Lotito reports, "all forms of art must be independent of its forms and should be able to produce what is called "aesthetic emotion" in the eye of the viewers." (cited in Adeyemi, 2012, p.35).

This somehow cuts across nations, irrespective of the time and place the art work is done. Similar to the position of many Nigerian and African artists, my position in this research is that all artistic forms should aim at signification of forms. In other words, "great work of art produced either in paint or wood or any material should be stable and unobscure, simply based on the fact that its awakenings are supposed to remain free of independence of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world" (Bell, 2003, p.7). On this note, the propositions enshrined in the politics of culture and representation and the seeming surface effects that accompany representations of culture call for a re-examination of what we mean when we proclaim a culture as modern. Given the contextual differences in time and experiences between antecedent past and 21<sup>st</sup> Century present, a culture and art tradition in the latter period such as the coastal Yoruba are inevitably modern in reation to their past. What matters and should

matter to an understanding and study of such an art tradition within its own iconography as undertaken in this research, is that it responds to its society, past and present. This is to the extent that “to the people who have greatly explored art forms either in Europe or any part of the world should hold on to the facts that what seems interesting should be forms of aesthetic emotions” (Lotito, 2002, p. 15). For instance, the formalists based their arguments on the representation of the external world which is relatively different from other philosophical trends, and most importantly the formalists looked at lines, curves, shapes, and colours while for the coastal Yoruba, the employment of any or all of these features (lines, curves, shapes, and colours), materiality and media, depends on the functional principles and on the aesthetic emotions they contribute or generate within the socio-cultural milieu.

Unarguably, art ‘movements’ have in no small measure helped to offer an indepth understanding of principles surrounding arts and theories of representation since the twentieth century. Irrespective of the society and period, materiality has always been important in terms of what constitutes art material and how each is used. For example, some modernist artists like Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso, in their attempts to create forms different from all forms of materials were more engaged or preoccupied with some things done by other prominent artists of the modern era (Warburton, 2003). They have explored issues surrounding abstraction, conventions and materiality in their practice as means of visual communication or reading templates. It is interesting to note, however that, “artistic activities were now absorbed under the general rubric of “purposeful” art. ‘Artists’ individual ideologies were sacrificed and replaced by the collective and previous artistic developments were disavowed and replaced by the so called mass activities including street decoration, designs for mass dramatisations and agi-transport”

(Staff, 2011, p.35). Of importance to this study are different types of research materials and how these feature in works such as paintings, drawings, sketches, colours, books, sculptures, and secondly on artists and art objects in public and private holdings and museums that foreground this research project on the coastal Yoruba art form.

The literature search draws from the wealth of ideas from primary and secondary sources and from the works of other scholars. In order to foreground this research within its particular Nigerian arts and culture, this literature review will be discussed under four sub-headings:

- (i) Nigerian arts.
- (ii) Traditional and Contemporary Yoruba art and crafts.
- (iii) Coastal Yoruba arts and crafts.
- (iv) Related theories from modern to contemporary arts - a global perspective.

## **2: 02 Nigerian Arts**

In many recent discussions regarding the delineation of historical time in African cultural studies, two factors are often referred to and are very noticeable. They are the designations of traditional and contemporary times. These reference points do not convey an adequate conception of historical time in African cultural studies. Their continued employment perpetuates some fallacies about the development of arts and culture in many African societies. What a good number of historical and anthropological commentators outside the continent consider to be the traditional past, despite its multifarious colourations, cannot be the product of a single tradition. The first of these fallacies is the homogenization of African cultures.

Homogenization, including its consequent reductionism of otherwise vast progressively-evolving cultural landscapes prompts the query; can one cultural environment and tradition be responsible for Benin and Ife art sculptures or forms, even where we hold on to the hypothesis that the two examples of African arts and cultures stated above are siblings? For the obvious reason of avoiding a reductionist reading of Nigeria's or Yorubaland's lived history and reality, the term "traditional" will be employed in this study in its broadest sense to refer to arts derived from or inspired by indigenous ideas and cultures covering two distinct epochs (Ogiomoh, 2013).

These are the period before European colonialism up to 1862 when Lagos, the geographical home of the coastal Yoruba, became a British colonial territory and the colonial period up to 1914 when the southern and Northern protectorates were amalgamated by the Governor-General Sir Frederick Lugard into the colony and protectorate of Nigeria (Smith, 1979). Similarly a term like "contemporary" which implies "recent" and the co-existence of the past inclusive of Nigeria's colonial periods and the present is problematic and will be used loosely in this study to refer to Nigerian and Yoruba arts and art movements from 1914. Consequently, it is important to include in this study other historical and arts periods such as post-colonialism, modernism and post-modernism all of which have impacted the history, development and study of Nigerian and Yoruba arts in no small measure. Coastal Yoruba has been shaped by the impact of colonial rule, post-colonialism, modernism, post-modernism and globalisation. While considering all these movements and periods as factors and as stimuli for innovativeness in my paintings, my exploration of coastal Yoruba art within the frame work of history touches on arguments as to what constitutes modernity in Nigerian, Yoruba and coastal Yoruba societies: put in different context, what is it about coastal Yoruba

art that qualifies it as modern African visual arts inspite of Euro-American hegemonic framework that fervently denies such status to it? At best Western academic concerns have labelled new manifestations in African art as “alternative or surrogate modernism”. This suggests a review of periodisation schema proposed for African visual arts. The option to review such varieties of dominant cyclic plan opens to discourse, diverse thinking on the historical value of African visual arts. We may then be asking, what it means to be modern. My initial stand is that modernism, as a concept, cannot be based or be deemed valid on a constructed premise that has itslf been appropriated by the West since the enlightenment. In other words, is modernism simply the definition of a fad, or that simply, it defines a spatio-temporal reality that is immanent and not contingent on specific historical and cultural experiences and locations? Bruno Latour has theorised on the West’s claim to the status of being modern, considering the so- called progress of its civilisations enshrined in the enlightenment epistemology. Such an argument has not been extended to a consideration of how and when Africa entered its own modern age or even whether modernism is and should be different for each society given the degree of global integration propelled by advances in technology.

The many socio-political and cultural influence that Nigeria and Africa began to experience with Europeans from the Atlantic slave trade to the colonial period, and the developments since then have also had huge impact on Lagos as the capital of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria until 1991, and continuing even thereafter. Given the time of this study from 2011 to 2014, it is necessary to consider whether the role and influence of Lagos as the cultural heart of Yorubaland and as one of Africa’s biggest and busiest seaports have had any impact on the arts and people of coastal Yoruba. Such a consideration is essential in

determining whether any of the named arts movements such as cubism and modernism, have had any effects on indigenous coastal Yoruba arts and crafts.

If modernity, as it has been understood since 16<sup>th</sup> century is centred around Western ideology and influences, one can speculate that the coastal Yoruba arts has been exposed to such influences. The coastal Yoruba are very creative and distinctive in their artistic exploration and are highly influential among other sub-groups that populate Nigeria. The earliest text materials found on visual arts and crafts in Africa, especially black Africa, have focused more on three dimensional art and commentators such as Frank Willet, Roy Sieber, Ulli Beier, Evelyn Brown, Jean Kennedy, Marshal Mount, Susan Vogel, Henry Drewel, John Picton, and Simon Ottenberg along side African art historians have equally helped to further strengthen research in contemporary art history.

These writers however, viewed mostly the found art works or forms, highlighting among other things, the cultural significance and stylistics of Nigerian arts without giving much thought to their meanings and functions or focusing on their patterns, signs and symbolism (Filani, 2005). Most of the early writers and authors on African art were anthropologists, explorers and ethnographers whose interest were based on the cultural significance of the art objects to the neglect of forms and contents. It is noteworthy, however, that their robust explorations of cultural artefacts laid a good foundation for more understanding and classifications of Nigerian and African arts and crafts, their contributions, functions and styles (Brain,1980), (Fagg,1963), (Carrol, 1964), (Vassina,1984). They all referred to the rich cultural heritage found among Nigerian peoples such as the art forms peculiar to Benin, Igbo-Ukwu, Ife, Owo, Esie and a variety of more recent traditions of wood, and stone carvings. None of these however, commentators and critics alike, has mentioned anything about the arts of the coastal Yoruba.

The various histories and indigenous experiences that have shaped Nigeria's contemporary cultural space and arts cannot be the product of one history but multiple histories. Importantly, it is essential to situate the art and historical studies of a nation or culture in the right context which is the primary objective of the art historians. They need to properly analyse the history that has shaped the art of a nation in the right perspective, before making critical assertions or judgments. Apparently, when history is properly conveyed, it often creates a better understanding of the art forms. When that history is properly understood, we will come to terms with the reality that instead of the homogenized notion of traditional African arts that has persisted for long, artists and art historians would be confronted with diverse traditions of arts and culture with a diachronic depth. That diachronic depth is further enhanced by the synchronic location of history and the recognition of difference in cultural and historical experiences even among closely related entities and societies as Wangboje (1977) explains in *Man, Mask and Myth*. Suffice to state that, the purpose and history of Nok art and history is definitely not the purpose and history of Ife and not even that of Ife and Benin can be argued to be one or the same history despite the ancient cultural relationship between the two societies.

The same goes for Aina Onabolu's works (Adepegba, 1995) vis-a-vis the distinctiveness of Ben Enwonwu's art forms. Interestingly these two pioneer artists used a novel approach in their works especially in their integration of both traditional and modern forms. This new way of expression, adopted by Aina Onabolu and Ben Enwonwu, is derived from what is now known as the theory of "natural synthesis" which in comparison to the works of earlier, pre-colonial artists, "represents the art style of Nigerian modernist tendencies (Filani, 1997, p.



18)”. The paradox of artistic purposes and distinctions that underlie shifts in traditions and ways that both relate to history is encapsulated in Podro thus:

*The Egyptians did not produce their art for the Greek and they did not produce it for us. It served Said Hereder, their own funerary cults which gave meaning to each gesture. Hereder made great play with puzzlement which we may imagine an Egyptian to have had when faced by a Greek warrior who never released his weapon or an Aphrodite who never finished getting out of his bath” (Podro, 1992, p. 1).*

The value of artwork thus underscores the historical value and significance of its period including the coding and interpretations of its signs, patterns and symbols and the circumstances of its making. A delimitator of fluid historical time bears the identity of its age. As Adepegba (1995) makes clear for us, each age and time reflects an epistemic identity which becomes a mark of its time, when it was deposited. The concept of deposition is used in this study to explain the fact that the art of every culture and historic period is essentially a new entrant into the repertoire of a society’s artistic forms. In essence, while it is possible to separate coastal Yoruba arts as culturally and historically specific, it consists of the experiences, influences and cultural imprints of several epochs from ancestral origins to present day.

Although the old artistic forms co-exist with new ones contemporaneously, the identity of the new will always be distinct because it showcases ideas which are innovative and there is a profound separation between the old and the new. In this scenario the new becomes the modern identity or face for an artist, artistic tradition or movement within a contemporary setting, even if it unsettles what society had come to terms with. This is because, as new identities and artistic practices emerge, they would have to be known, to be related with, so that an experience of them may lead to some or more understanding of the given artistic

tradition. This is where Collingwood and O'Connor (1989), contemplating the nature and particularity of the term contemporary, agree:

*Contemporary history embarrasses a writer not only because he knows too much, but also because what he knows is too undigested, too uncounted, too atomic. It is only after a close and prolonged reflection that we begin to see what was essential and what was important, to see why things happened as they did and to write history instead of newspapers" (Collingwood, in Reads, 1994, pp 11-12).*

The claim to know the contemporary is therefore seen as a kind of conceptual violence, a fixing of the fluid and formless energies of the urgent (but tenuously) present now into a knowable act of critical choosing. This formulation rests upon the inherent division between experience and knowledge, a belief that when we understand life we are no longer experiencing it (O'Connor, 1989, p.1).

Collingwood (cited in Reads, 1994) and O'Connor (1989) refer to the undigested nature of events in contemporary art, prompting the question for this study as to whether it is wrong to consider post-modernity as a distinct concept and influence in African cultural studies. If the identity of some of the artists is examined in their creative practices, then their works can best be viewed on the basis of when they are produced in terms of iconography. If indeed the spirit of every age discovers its own image, then one should think that the focus of this study and the subsequent creation of a body of artworks is another way of re-evaluating and re-examining Yoruba and African art in general. In view of the age and time we live in, such a study can only be undertaken in a context that is not traditional but at least modern and post-modernist historically if not stylistically. The artistic identities of the coastal Yoruba and that of this researcher constitute patterns that need to be identified as suggested by Holy (1999) who observes that identity in its naming has always been aesthesised. Kubler (1962) observes in relation to Van der Pot (2007) that "if the world in its multicultural reality has

become a global village what stops us aligning cleavages with what reality bears" (Adepegba, 1995 p.23). It may be for art-historians and critics to determine, but not necessarily *the* condition for, how artists operate, the extent of their works and styles within a cultural context and time.

Though the researcher has attempted for the purpose of this study to delineate periods in coastal Yoruba art in order to situate it historically and culturally as a living tradition, according to Kubler; "it is impossible to formulate directives for the correction and proportion of the duration of the periods in relation to each other, and for their number" (Adepegba, 1995, p.105). He urges that periodization which forms the quintessence of history should be ideographic (i.e not based on historical law) and endocultural, arising from subject-matter rather than from exocultural necessities of geography, biology or physical qualities of man. By early 1960s and 1970s, different Nigerian historical cultures, artistic traditions and practices had attracted a lot of academic interest from explorers, anthropologists and ethnographers who had little understanding of the many artifacts and images found in the regions of Nigeria. Cornelius Adepegba has in addition to comments on other features of Nigerian art traditions attempted to classify their distinct phases and provides a categorization of modern tendencies in the visual arts of Nigeria, which brings together, a good variety of contemporaneous representations and engagements by artists in Nigeria beginning from the work of Aina Onabolu. African visual arts may in general be defined as consisting of and beginning from the point of contact with the west, it also incorporates "survival of traditional past" and neo-traditional manifestations in the contemporary.

Most of these authors such as Mount (1973), Vogel (1991), Henry (1994) and Picton (1988) made different kinds of assertions and postulations describing the

arts in the context of what they thought they meant, were used for, how they were produced, and by whom. While some of them, especially Henry (1994) and Picton (1988) also carried out distinctive studies on Nigerian art with detailed studies on Yoruba archeology, history, origins, art styles, and functions no attention was given to the arts of the coastal Yoruba people who constitute a prominent part of Yoruba society and are regarded by historians as one of the most influential people in Nigeria and beyond. Beier (1968), Biobaku (1973), Ekpo (1977), Shaw (1978) and Ajetunmobi (1995) on their parts, argue for a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Yoruba art such as those of Ife and Owo and other Nigerian arts like the Benin, Nok, and Igbo-ukwu. These arguments had the additional effect of providing or reinforcing a loose categorization of Nigerian art traditions along the lines propounded by Adepegba, Beier (1968), Biobaku (1973), Ekpo (1977), Shaw (1978), and Ajetunmobi (1995) among many others.

On their parts Pemberton III and Abiodun (1990) in their joint publication undertook a fairly inclusive analysis of the cultural legacy of the Yoruba people with respect to the themes of their traditional arts and crafts. Their study provided chronological overview and insight on Yoruba arts objects ranging from drum, mat weaving, divination tray and house post and on the concepts of forms and spirituality. This and similar studies focus mainly on the cultural significance of arts and art objects without much information on the themes and functions of the arts found in other parts of Nigeria and beyond.

Kasfir (1999) approached the history of Nigerian arts and crafts with some rigour. He went further to give some account of forms based on the arts of Kolade Oshinowo, Gani Odutokun and Joshua Akande who were influenced by the desire to capture change epitomized in scenes of rural domestic life in such countries as Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia. There has been a lot of studies on these

countries on the East and Central African regions without any critical studies from West Africa where urban landscape paintings had already become a tradition with art colleges, institutions and professional artists.

Adesanya (1992) for instance, examined in detail and analysed the trends and history of landscape modern Nigerian landscape painting. However, Adesanya's artistic reflection gave only accounts of few things and subjects in the area of crafts and other art objects but ignored the craft traditions, their signs, patterns, motifs and symbolism. In both of these studies, Adesanya paid attention to only individual landscape paintings without an indepth study of sculptures and crafts. Adepegba's (1995) own critical findings were based on an extensive survey of prominent dwellings on the African continent and he was able to unveil Nigerian arts extending beyond other aspects of craft traditions but there was very little critique or commentary on contemporary art. Adepegba also did a lot of classification of Nigerian art within the context of post-colonial Africa. His studies have helped to broaden the scope and understanding of Nigerian art traditions from traditional to modern era. Interestingly, Adepegba's acclaimed studies focused only on the sculpture and thematic structure of Ife, Owo and Esie art traditions. Like commentators before him, there was no attempt by Adepegba to sign-post the coastal Yoruba or proper study of Yoruba arts signs, patterns, motifs and symbolism in general.

At the same time, analysis of the wood carvings of other Yoruba towns were reviewed without giving attention to the coastal Yoruba people of Lagos State. Egonwa (2011) looked at the different crafts in Nigeria. His studies went further by undertaking a critical analysis of the themes, functions and classification of forms and the effects of ethnic and regional adaptations of Nigerian art. Despite the wider remit announced in the study's introduction, Egonwa's work was

homogenous and based on the study of arts and crafts in greater Yoruba society without distinguishing internal regional dynamics and sub-ethnic identities.

The result was that the study only gave prominence to the arts of the Ijebu and Awori, two of the most influential cultural traditions and populations in coastal Yoruba land. Elebute (2010) on the other hand conducted a critical survey of sections of Yoruba society of Oyo, Owo, and Ife - focussing on the use of new techniques noticeable in the works of prominent visual artists like Bruce Onobrakpeya. Elebute's study has helped in some respect to clarify the issues of identity and materiality within the context of Nigerian modernist art, and equally in the exploration of additive plastography as a means or medium of art expression among post-modern Nigerian and African artists.

## **2: 03 Traditional and Contemporary Yoruba art and crafts**

In recent times, studies of the history of Nigerian art forms and crafts have focused on ethnic adaptations. Each ethnic group has its distinctive forms and crafts. Most are very colourful with their themes, colours, patterns, motifs, designs and structures coded with messages, meanings and mythological readings that distinguish one ethnic group or region from another. Fagg (1963), Aniakor (1988), Oyelola (1976) and Ikwuemesi (1996) in their respective studies report that ethnic connotations are very noticeable in the traditional and modern art practices among Nigerian artists, and that the Yoruba art and crafts are generally more symbolic than most other art forms found in Nigeria.

Their claims were based the on arts of the western region without much thought for the coastal Yoruba. Abiodun, Adepegba, Henry and Lawal (1984) have studied Nigerian art traditions from the point of aesthetics, significance,

philosophy and modernity as seen in the works of John Picton, Frank Willet, John Pemberton III, Henry Drewal and Michael Harris. In their attempts at studying the distinctive styles of Yoruba arts, they have also left out the coastal Yoruba as a distinct sub-group. Yet evidence from myths, folklore, history and styles signal that the area is part of a very diverse Yoruba culture and civilisation that stretches to Benin Republic. Moyo Okediji (1999) also carried out historical studies of transatlantic kinship Yoruba art in Yoruba diaspora communities resident in Europe and America especially in South America, where descendants of former slaves from Yoruba and other parts of Africa such as Angola have not only retained but built upon the Yoruba influences that have historically shaped and defined their arts, crafts and philosophy.

Okediji (1999, pp.107-126) on the other hand, identifies artistic and important differences within supposed homogenic cultures and artistic expressions; he points out that whereas in Yoruba society, beads are used in socio-historical contexts with an emphasis on their origins, uses, and significance, they are used differently in Benin society. Among the Yoruba of south-western Nigerian and their Benin neighbours, beads express the people's ways of life. It is a strong aspect of adornment among the Benin people and a significant part of their identity, and is used to express their cultural, political, spiritual, economic life and aesthetic patterns. This iconographical use of beads in Benin Kingdom is slightly different from what obtains in Yoruba culture where the bead serves a more complex role of identifying as well as integrating and unifying wider sociopolitical and ritual functions in how and when they are worn and by who. Adepegba (2000) in his view opines that songs and rituals are performed in both Yoruba and diaspora societies across the Atlantic today which eulogise the link among the Yoruba, Benin and Ife and societies in South America and that the pride the people take in social

practices like songs and ritual practices among others re-echo their undeniable links to Yoruba culture. Some of these practices have the same name, content, context and meaning, for instance, the Olokun (river-godess) worship is similar among the two peoples, Awori and Ijebu, as well as among the descendants of the Yoruba in South America, in Cuba and other parts of the West Indies.

The symbolic objects, costumes and significance of Olokun worship are similar with only a thin line of difference between the ritual and the paraphenelia of the worshiper (Visiona, Ponor, et al 2001, pp.313-315). Abiodun, Adepeba, Henry and Lawal's (1984) "Welcome to Badagry", an exhibition guide of Lagos Black Heritage - further highlights the symbols of power and authority in traditional Nigerian culture and the place of symbols in Yoruba cultural setting as being profound among the indigenous entities which comprise the western states of Nigeria.

The artistic links between the Yoruba and their neighbours and their influences in the diaspora have been well-documented. Their embrace of other influences, whether these be political or modernism through various facets locally and globally, have fared less well but extends to different art forms. Peju Layiwola (2002) undertook a critical appraisal of the contemporary brass casting tradition in Benin, a society closely associated with the coastal Yoruba. Her survey and analysis of imagery and artists on Benin bronze and iron casting from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century were known for their iconographical symbols, themes and significance. These were usually made to emphasize continuity and are remarkable for how their patterns and signs reflect some of the approaches noted in coasta Yoruba arts. The arts and skills for making especially bronze-casting were a family tradition transferred from one generation to another through trade guilds known as Iguneronmwa. Onobrakpeya and Adeyemi (2008) explore the use of traditional signs, motifs and



symbols as means of artistic exploration in their art. They discuss the use of indigenous forms and how each region uses common signs, symbols and motifs in an attempt to communicate and to reinforce the visual language inherent in the region. One of the many significant common features they discovered is the centrality of beads as a design and communication motif, even though the specificities of use, colour and meaning are inevitably different and diverse. In their publication, *Perspectives of Culture and Creativity in Nigerian Art* (2005), Filani and Ademuleya look at Nigerian art landscape and the classifications and creative connotations that reflect the hallmarks of specific ethnic settings.

According to Okunade (2003) beaded objects are parts of the items used to identify and honour traditional title holders and as a distinct marker of identification among the obas, chiefs, high chiefs and notable subjects in the city of Lagos. He stresses the imagery and potency of beads as signs of communication between oracles and priests. Similarly, Obayemi (1985) stresses that the crowns of the Yoruba Oba (king) are usually made of beads; hence they are referred to as beaded crowns. Ojo (1990) offers a descriptive analysis of crowns worn in Yorubaland starting from the production materials which include beads to types as well as forms of crowns. Oyefolu (2003, pp.1-5) - examines the relationship between Yoruba cowried and beaded crowns, highlighting their forms, religious and historical significance in an attempt to use the signs and patterns of beads in his work to determine the evolution of "typical" Yoruba crowns.

Considering authority (*ase*) as a unique characteristics of beads, Ajayi (1974) explains that for every Yoruba domain to authenticate autonomy it would have to lay claim to Ile-Ife as the cradle city of the Yoruba so as to have the prerogative of wearing a fringed beaded crown. This view is corroborated by Chanda (2008) who asserts that during investiture ceremonies, king and chiefs receive courtly regalia,

notably beaded crowns or other special headed ornaments that proclaim their power and authority, or their relationship to a culturally significant Yoruba root and ancestry such as Ile-Ife and Oduduwa. Apart from elegance and grandeur enshrined in beads, they also command power, authority and spirituality as beads are part of the most important paraphernalia of royalty. Among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, the tradition of the beaded crown, or *ade* dates to the legendary first ancestor or ruler of the Yoruba, Oduduwa, who is said to have placed an *ade* on the head of each of his sixteen sons. The *ade* consists of a beaded veil hanging from a cone-shaped cap that is covered with interlaced pattern of beads. The designs, patterns and motifs on each can be used to communicate and read the nature of links with Oduduwa, that is how distant or less important and how close or more important, a royal personality is in relation to Oduduwa and to Yoruba ritual and cultural histories.

Affixed to the cone are beaded relief sculptures of human faces and birds with symbolic meaning in Yoruba culture. Thompson (1983) claims that the beaded veils protect common men from gazing directly into the king's face. Falola and Ajetunmobi (2003) emphasize that an appropriate setting for the study of art and authority is the Yoruba beaded-embroidered crown with a beaded veil, as a symbolic tradition attributed to the Yoruba king. Beaded objects are also linked with divination and healing among cults; and there is hierarchical distinction in the use of beaded jewelry among the Yoruba.

The design and making of each of the stated arts, ritual objects and social regalia are based on a system of signs, patterns, colours, motifs and materials that can be used to code the style of the artist who made them and the authority and functions of the wearers and in especially ritual contexts, the reasons why they are worn and the meaning of the rituals. Adepegba (1995) stresses the potency, usage

and origin of certain beadworks in Nigeria and observes that title holders in Yorubaland often embellish their paraphernalia with patterns of beads in different colours. Sheba (2002) gives an account relating to the use of beads in *aroko* among the Yoruba as a communication medium for sending symbolic messages to people who have to decode the messages in order to understanding the information communicated. This implies that beads are an effective medium of communication among the Yoruba. Drewal (1994) in his own view discusses extensively the place or functions of African beaded works, describing them as a vital art of potent symbols that expresses personal identity, spiritual affiliations, status and wealth, as well as royalty and authority among the Yoruba.

While analysing the importance of beads, Drewal (1994) draws upon the philosophical concept of transformation in Yoruba cosmos to explain the essence of beads as points of brightness and signs of power to mediate light, reflecting, deflecting, transmitting, and transforming light and the power of the wearer in the process. Drewal (1994) describes the potency of beads in the context of the wisdom and powers that a necklace of beads contains, viewing it as a secret reserve which is relied upon for information, and a defence in the trans-social battle between rulership and following, between combatants, and as marker of relationship between oppressors and the oppressed in their various political forms and human identities.

Pemberton (cited in Fagg, 1980, *Yoruba Beaded: Art of Nigeria*) analyses beads in its range of colours and the attributes of its luminosity and powers to transmit light through matter, which makes beads as important instrument of religious symbolism. Pemberton also sees beads to be highly exclusive, stating that the privilege and authority to use beads belongs to the kings, the priest and priestesses, as well as to herbalists or diviners who possess spiritual powers to

communicate between the secular and the sacred. Just as there are patterns, functions and purposes in the use of beads, so there are in how these and other materials are used in Nigerian and African arts. Some materials are chosen for their durability, their effects and for their ability to complement and blend effectively with artistic patterns, signs, motifs and colours.

The same relationship that light and patterns play in bead works extends to colour and fabric. Adeyemi (2011, p.14) opined that the “basic features of cloth is colour and everywhere in the world, colours are grounded in deep cultural meaning and context”. Judith Pereni (2011) further gave examples from some parts of Sierra Leone and Mali where hand spun cotton is sometimes dyed in brown effects. A brief note on the symbolism of materials sheds light on how artists exploit such materials in their arts.

In Senegal, resins produced from kolanuts are occasionally used to give an orange-brown effect while the kuba of Zaire makes use of a different range of dyes to produce various shades of yellow, orange, red, black and purple. Certain woven cloth and mat are embellished with inscriptions and motifs which have different cultural meanings or concepts. Judith and Adeyemi (2011, p.29) note that, “designs could be achieved by varying the size, material and thickness of weft yarn while differences in the colours of warp and yarns create contrasting patterns”.

Other methods mentioned by Beier (1968) are painted, drawn and stamped patterns, embroidered patterns, applique patterns, surface attachment patterns and alternation of pre-patterned factory cloth. Trowel (1965) posits that one or more motifs are repeated in some fashion or if they are not repeated, are fitted together to make a balance within the decorated forms. Such patterns are often abstracted or geometrical, but representational forms of human, animal or floral

types or material objects may be used provided that their treatment is decorative rather than photographic in intention.

Trowel (1965) argues that the first and most important things during a wedding ceremony in Nubia are the mats sat upon by the bride, bridegroom and guests. The mats are put down by the women on the first day of the wedding and remain in place until the fortieth day. The use of mats for traditional marriage among the Yoruba people is an old practice. The mats are well decorated with patterns and motifs of different forms and are spread on the floor during a marriage ceremony for the groom to prostrate on for his in-laws or spread in his room to be seated upon by guests. Unlike the Nubians, such mats do not necessarily remain till the fortieth day but their designs, patterns and colours communicate social class, the histories of the family concerned, and their present and future aspirations. Woven cloth or mats which have distinctive forms are used to communicate and enhance cultural meanings. In any cultural context, a particular type of cloth or mat can have a visible sign, clearly signaling gender, social status, political office, allegiance to a deity or personal prestige. All these functions are information from the user to guests and observers.

Ikwemesi (1996, p.10) stated however, that one of the numerous functions of mats, especially amongst the Yoruba is during burial rites. He opined that "the Yoruba practice was to bury the dead in their own huts where the body shall be wrapped in mat, afterwards covered with brands of leaf". Although Ojo (1990) suggests that mats were and are used mainly for sitting and sleeping on, their lowly position did not mean they are plain in design. They are designed specifically with patterns and signs communicating significant information about the dead or their family or even about the relatives or friends who may have offered them as burial gifts.

Aside from this, he further stated that mats could be spread on wooden and iron beds, and used as carpet, ceiling and screen materials. Biobaku (1973) submitted that, in Africa, particularly in Uganda, plaited palm leaves are used for mats, bags, markets stalls and even temporary shelter. Each pattern has a name and it is the social, ritual and mythological ideas of the universe and mythical adventures that inform and sustain them and all human interactions that Yoruba art patterns, signs and motifs repeat, reinforce, borrow or adapt.

## **2: 04 Coastal Yoruba Arts and Crafts**

Written information and materials on coastal Yoruba art and crafts are very few; thus, what one finds are mainly from looking at the crafts traditions as being part of the cultural values of coastal Yoruba region. The discourse on Yoruba art, in terms of its forms, significance, and functionality does not consider coastal Yoruba arts as distinctive among other Yoruba sub-groups of south-western Nigeria. Most of the authors only mention in passing, the art objects without details on the characteristics of the arts found or ascribed to the coastal people such as Awori, Egun and Ijebu art tradition. Ajetunmobi (2003) stresses that the matting and canoe carving traditions were most conspicuous among the coast and that these forms of crafts design seemed to have thrived in that area because of the closeness of the people to the riverrine area. He further argued that the people have the taste and capacity for adopting various colour schemes for their artistic embellishment which helps in the writing or inscriptions, decoration, signs, and symbols on the mats and on woven products.

However, the study claims that the combination of colouring and signs on the mats is meant not only for aesthetics but also to display the skills of the

people involved in order to reflect on life through their crafts techniques, and to show off their individual and collective trade marks. Curwen,(as cited in Ajetunmobi, 2003), posits that most of the creeks and lagoons were so shallow that communities could only travel and communicate by canoe which prompted the growth in the production of canoes and boats as means of transport. Out of the conditions of their physical, commercial, social, and religious environments, the coastal Yoruba evolved their art forms and crafts as the medium through which they are expressed, made and practised.

Over a long period of time, the grouping of artists as guilds, the establishment of creative patterns and signs, the emergence of arts traders and collectors and the expansion in the activities that called for the inclusion of art objects laid the foundation for what later became art schools. Each art school or group is famous for its style and for the materials it uses and for the medium with which it works. Adeyemi (2008), Filani (2005) and Okediji (1999) agree on the significance and potency of beads in the context of Onaism (Yoruba) tradition that emphasises the significance, symbolism and powers that necklaces made from beads enjoy. They however, view beads as a secret reserves of ritual powers, as markers of royalties and class distinctions among chiefs, and as a mark of status between communities and towns within Yoruba society. Beads in Yoruba art are signs of trans-cultural communication, they are used to create hegemonic relations in cultural transactions in which the upper class is distinguished from the commoners in their various political forms and human identities. Adeyemi (2012) further stresses that a form such as beads or other art material and artistic objects stand for something by relationship, suggestions, interpretation, resemblance or association, they could also reveal quantity, special elements or varieties.

It is believed that human beings have always been concerned with symbols from their earliest existence. Filani (1997) describes symbolism as the language of the psyche. In recent times I have been exploring and adapting Yoruba indigenous forms, symbols and patterns. So far, these forms, symbols and patterns have revealed very interesting and intriguing concepts in the understanding of contemporary modern Yoruba and Nigerian arts. Oyefolu (2003) observes that the coastal Yoruba sub-group, practise rites and rituals that reflect the hallmark of the worship of water deities as well as respect for gods and goddesses of water. Oyefolu further argues that the coastal region is a melting pot of dwellings and the home of most Yoruba and several other cultures outside the state as a result of cultural cohesion resulting from inter-group settlements as well as because of the diverse commercial and industrial activities that have come together in coastal Lagos State in particular.

Awofisayo (2003) in the book entitled *The Evolution and Development of Lagos State* looked into the physical and cultural transformation of Lagos and its environment, highlighting the visible connections between the geographical landscape and the arts. Interestingly, the study by Awofisayo is also a chronological note in the physical development of the coastal Yoruba region and Lagos as one of the most advanced cities in Nigeria. Akindele (2003) discusses the influence of Benin Kingdom to the East of coastal Yoruba land especially in the tradition of the *Eko* people, the original inhabitants and land owners. Some of such influences are the bladed sword used as the symbol of obaship, the *Ogalade* society uses the "Abebe" or fan while the war captains or *Abagbon* identify themselves with the top hat or "keremesi".

The insignia for office of the four classes of chiefs in Yoruba monarchical structure indicates different things: the sword suggests a Benin connection; the



horse tail an Oyo/Ife connection; the fan a Yoruba/Benin or further eastern connection, while the top hat must have been the influence of the Nupe or further northern connection and more importantly of the Portuguese. Akeusola's (2003) critical analysis of south-western Nigeria sheds some light on how ancient people lived in the past. The study posits that the themes, symbols, supporting myths, design motifs, signs and patterns found in Yoruba traditional story-telling and folktales or "*Alo-apagbe*" and poetry such as *Ifa* verse, *Oriki*, *Orile*, *Ekun-Iyawo*, and *Ijala* can be seen in *Egun Alare*, *Isipa-Ode* (Masquerade) and some other traditional displays, reflect the cultural life of the coastal Yoruba people.

Olabitan's (cited in Akeusola, 2003) view of the coastal Yoruba of Lagos supports my contention that despite its cultural and economic importance in Yoruba society and Nigeria there has been few studies on coastal Yoruba. Okunade (2003) observes that *karajagba* music of the Idejo chiefs and Igbe royal music of the kings, princes and princesses of Lagos were more prominent among the Awori and Ijebu people. He also observes that Igbe music as performed today makes use of a simple rhythmic structure, supported by a six stroke bell accompaniment. Okunade adds further that the Awori culture, one of the most populous sub-groups of the coastal Yoruba, is influenced Benin cultural values such as the use of royal *gbedu* drums which were presented to *Asipa*, the legendary founder of Lagos monarchy and its first *Oba* in the sixteen century by the then *Oba* of Benin in acknowledgment of his military prowess (Ajetunmobi, 2003).

Today the *gbedu* drums are only found among the traditional musical orchestra of the coastal region and used for chieftaincy installations and other significant events by the *Oba* and chiefs of Lagos at *Iwuye* (coronation) ceremonies. Coastal Yoruba and Benin share more cultural features than with other Yoruba sub-groups. This is evident in how the coastal Yoruba, especially the

Awori who are said to have fought the Benin expansionist move to Lagos and Asipa's clan who repatriated the body of their dead Benin prince to Benin, interpret signs and patterns like white-cap, bladed swords, beads, staff.

According to Ajayi (1974) the historical evidence of how coastal Yoruba culture, language and arts developed can be seen in their linguistic structure, musicology, anthropology, architecture, festival and oral traditions. He also notes the great influence of slave returnees on the region's arts. An example of this is how the patterns and signs imprinted on the totems of Awori and Ikorodu and "Oriki" embody different historical and artistic reconstructions of the socio-political and economic history of the coastal region and other Lagosians. Makinde (2004) discusses the polytheistic religion of the Yoruba people and its influences on their arts and culture. He argues that the Yoruba people worship different deities such as *Obatala, Oduduwa, Moremi, Oluorogbo, Orisa-Ikire, Ailala, Sango, Osun, Yemoja, Egungun, Oro, Oke Badan, Gelede, Eyo, Agemo, Orisa-Oko* etc. In order to create the arts and images, music, dance and special attires used in the worship of these deities, artists have over the years learnt how to create different designs from their associated motifs, signs and patterns.

The study extends beyond mere descriptive survey, asserting that the coastal Yoruba people have creatively mastered the artistic display of skills in dress making such as *agbada, sapara, dansiki*, derived from *agbada* and the trousers or *sokoto* called *sooro, bagi* and *kembe*. According to Euba (1975, p. 471 cited in Sotunsa, 2005), coastal Yoruba traditional practices of poetry and music are synonymous and are a powerful influence on what artists paint and draw, design and sculpt. She suggests that music, song, chant, poetry and talking drum and the desire to render them as artistic as possible while capturing the essence of the deity or festival of which they are a part, has an effect on how artists work

with materials, on how they interpret and use design motifs and patterns as well as on the choices they make regarding images, colour, patterns and materials.

## **2:05 From Modern towards Contemporary Art: A Global Perspective**

In general, visual artists and art historians have been able to demystify art and artists situating art and design - among other disciplines like sciences, technology and law. Art movements and theories have gathered strength and become a platform and reference point against which all other forms of art could be set (Warburton, 2003). The Romantics and likewise their nineteenth-century successors concentrated on the act of the mind, and spirit although, some still chiefly based their renditions on aspects of the discernable world. Contemporary modernity has all the while been restricted to the evaluation of cultural structures of the West, in what Lauri Fristenberg (2006) considers a "stale traditional/modernity/bridicic debate" that is entirely "of Western reception". In the first-three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century artists distilled Modernism in art through feelings of vision, rather than on the external world. The late 1930s marked the period where artists looked towards theories of the unconscious as a referent and as Pollock claimed: "we're all of us influenced by Freud, I guess. I've been a Jungian for a long time." (Arkle, 2014, p.7) Pollock however, stated that "he was particularly impressed with (the Surrealists) concept of the source of art being the unconscious" (cited in Arkle, 2014, p.25).

There seems to be a series of the unconscious tendencies found in the works of the first generation of Surrealists which can be glimpsed throughout the writings of Sigmund Freud, who out of curiosity laid a solid foundation on the theory of the unconcious as a repository of suppressed tastes and feelings of loss and memories.

Feudian theory of the subconscious served and this of course, serves as basis for many European artists who fled from Nazi oppression to the United States of America.

Duane and Adeyemi (2011) observe that the influx from Europe coincided with America's new found confidence as artists flocked to New York in the way they once went to Paris. With this massive movement the centre stage of contemporary Western art shifted from Europe to America. Artists who fled to America however, engaged in teaching, studio practice and organising shows, art talks and exhibitions. These generally stirred things up in the visual arts landscape, opening new possibilities for American art and artists. Before long modernization gained ground in America because the leading European practitioners were already situated in American cities. The horrors of the Second World War (WW2) led most artists to rethink the relationship between art and life. Dislocation caused by war inspired artists to explore visual realms other than the representational and narrative. Henry (1994, p.25) notes that:

*Around 1950 it became clear that Paris was no longer the capital of art and that New York was rapidly staking a claim due to the liveliness of its offering and references and the generous availability of wealthy collectors. A new generation of artists uninhibitedly moved beyond Europe's most recent traditions, anti-ideological and highly emotional abstraction.*

'Contemporary' as used in this research, refers to the period which is not more than two decades ago inclusive of the present.

Events happening at the early turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have greatly helped in highlighting and re-shapening my painting composition while effecting new tendencies in the themes, contents and forms used. At the same time the paintings have been given considerable energy as well as improving the sensational expressiveness given to the thematic approach to the paintings. Similarly, the term

contemporary has continued to challenge the intuitive ability of artists regardless of the format or size of the images. This in effect, helped me to achieve the desired sensations, coherence, and at the same time, the aesthetic language with which to coordinate other component parts of the research output without losing their meaning and message. Some of the images produced were in avant-garde form as a move away from conceiving painting in the manner in which the Renaissance painters sought (Staff, 2011).

In the same vein, almost, if not all Nigerian artists such as Kolade Oshinowo, Kunle Adeyemi and Sam Ovralti to mention just few, now conceive painting as that which can only sustain the intrinsic value of its physical nature. However, this in one sense seems to have opened up new possibilities for a radical shift in the arts industry; and consequently, creating a platform or avenue for intense-arguments and counter-arguments from different quarters in Nigeria and likewise in the United Kingdom. In addition to this, critics and artists have raised questions or issues relating to: what constitute the art forms in this research? What guiding theory informs the mode of practice? How do I reflect on my works as practice as research? These are some of the questions which I have attempted to unpick through painting and drawing while in the field.

Further to this, art historians from Nigeria argue that while in practice artists truly see how an event-unfolds, all that varies is the way experiences are packaged. It is wrapping paper - the outward expression of the changing psychic modes of human experience - that provides the difference. The communication of arts taps instinctively into this psychic continuity and speaks meaningfully across divides. Suffice to say, that the paintings done in this reseach contribute to re-shaping concepts of what constitutes Yoruba art. I used what I saw outside the

purview of Lagos communities and at the same time reflected on them, through intuitionism and Western ideologies which were novel in new contexts. These features were used in the body of paintings to distinguish them from traditional interpretations (Reads, 1994) of coastal Yoruba arts.

This paradox influences the paintings and mixed media works produced in this research. While the paintings and drawings reflect originality, authorship and newness, the tendencies recurring in the studio, inclusive of innovations in iconographies, have been used in demonstrating particular reading templates (art forms) which are often associated with post-modernist thoughts. In the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the influences of surrealism, cubism, abstraction were quite noticeable in the works of artists such as Rothko and Gottlieb. They had already seen the works of few artists who had migrated to the United States, the later years of the works of the likes of Rothko, Newman and Gottlieb were quite fascinating and inspired the artworks found in this research, most especially in the area of exploration of abstraction. Some of the artists mentioned above gravitated towards combining the styles of European surrealism and abstraction in their paintings. Suffice to say that one of the examples given by Adeyemi (2011) is the work titled "The Bed" by Pop artist, Robert Rauschenberg, described as "splashed and brushed paint on a quilt and pillow which he then hung on a wall like a canvas work and labelled a combined painting" (Adeyemi, 2011, p.7).

The synthetic cubists of the early twentieth century, Picasso and Braque were the first to incorporate pieces of newsprint, wall paper, labels from wine bottles, and oil cloth into their paintings. I have taken great care to study and to reflect on the approach in this research to further extend the nature and use of materials beyond pigment while working in the same tradition or margin of

contemporary discourse, tailored to coastal Yoruba artistic concept. Another example of contemporary artists, Miriam Schapiro, who is best known for her paint and fabric infusion which she labelled "femmage," to express what she sees as the unification of feminine imagery and materials with the medium of collage, has also influenced my studio practice. Colin Renfrew in his book (2008) *The Psychology of Human Existence* figures it out, explores parallels between history, archaeology and contemporary art as a way to understand ourselves and then embodies this into a new experience which is the basis on which to explore the works of art. He describes this as the "engagement process" Renfrew (2008, p.8) that comes from perceiving the material world and then engaging with it through action and by acting upon it. This procedure has a lot in common with the process and the paintings done in this research.

Another example of a contemporary artist, this time from Nigeria, is Yinka Shonibare who is best known for his paint and fabric infusion which is labelled "Double Dutch". This painting examines and at the same time explores the issue of identity in contemporary art practice. Shonibare's concept of Double-Dutch fabric art technique uses various particularization of anachromism effects such as fabric collages to depict several historic 18<sup>th</sup> century paintings, such as the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough's "Mr and Mrs Andrew", and Henry Raeburn's "Reverend Robert Walker on Duddingston Loch".

As Rachel Cook notes in her report, Shonibare's work somehow, infuses or reflects a deep sense of his ambivalence in the creation of his installation works such as his series of photographic postures called *Diary* (cited in Lotito, 20002) in which Shonibare featured as the frock coat-wearing hero, playing billiards, laying in bed. Shonibare claimed that the works are reminiscent of the era of complete domination by colonialism and active repression of Africans. The attempt to give

a certain identity to works of art in Nigeria, led to the creation of works of art characterized by the delineation of fluid time into knowable identities. By the mere fact of its creation, the artwork sets off a periodization schema in reference to it itself in spite of the insistent runny character of time. These segmentations that have been identified so far link Nigeria's art history to the life experience of its people as documented in the artworks. That history has a macrocosmic attribute as far as Nigeria is concerned has been articulated in the statement:

*That macrocosmic value then relates to Nigeria as an entity topologically. But beyond the topological or geographical signification of arts in relation to history is also an artwork's personal history or the life experience of the artist. The artist's history and intuition becomes a particular experience that shapes his perception and the forms he creates (Anon, n.d.). (Adepegba, 1995).*

An identity is said to emerge in an art form when there is a general relationship in motive, ideology or the nature of the artistic form generated. This identity as a construct, is a product of cultural limits or "the epistemic figurative basis" of a culture and its historical progression. In the works of Yinka Shonibare, beyond the ideological grounds from where his works emerged, are also his life experiences as a person.

Such histories define an artist's phobias, likes, obsessions, associations etc. They become the unseen hands that shape the forms we encounter or identify within such an artist. Each work of art therefore is a definition of the coming together of histories, ideologies and intuition. Any attempt to understand an artist's artwork or an era's identity in its artworks places a particular demand on the historian of culture to come to terms with these histories as well as his own history as an interpreter. The integration of history and culture and their influences on an artist and his work means that it is as difficult to separate any of the determining factors, as it is often not possible to separate the artist from his



culture, his style and materials, and his output; these are artistically combined to make a statement. This interaction of art, history, style and output defines my approach, position, and relationship with the iconographies of coastal Yoruba art and the output from the research studio practice.

In the "Swing" (Plate 9, p.180) Shonibare combines bits of intricately patterned fabrics with installation and in this sculpture, constructs a highly decorative form, he creates movement and sensation between continents such as Europe, America, Asia and Africa. The picture is well arranged with a lot of consideration for "aesthetics emotion" and "signification of forms" and one can assume or proffer the interpretation that the swing stands for or symbolise enactments or actions that belie human activities while myth becomes the allusion to meaning in the enactment of a mask or human actions. By this act, one has been able to at least identify the work's semi-logical coding. Panofsky identifies this level of meaning making as iconographical analysis. In addition to this Adeyemi (2011, p. 24) posits that:

*Hofmann stressed a balance between spontaneity and formal structure and this approach became a model for generation of American painters. Equally, Robert Rauschenberg began combining ordinary objects and collage materials with abstract expressionistic brushwork in what he called combine painting. In the same vein, artists as well as scientists of the twentieth century challenged the already preconceived ideas of nature and reality; they created new levels of vision and consciousness. The explosion of new styles of art at the beginning of that century grew from post-impressionist trends.*

On provincial scales where regional art worlds such as African art history comes to view, there is a challenge regarding the contexts in which to bring into play a modern or contemporary terminology for the analysis or critique of such cultural productions. This contestation is brought to the fore more than ever before in the globalization of the history of art, which recognizes the term

"contemporary" as adequate for recent practices in visual arts. (Adeyemi, 2008, p.17) notes that:

*In their search for forms to express the new age, European artists looked to ancient but non-Western cultures for inspiration and creative renewal. For example, Constantine Brancusi, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, shared with other leading western artists of the twentieth century an interest in African, Iberia and other non-western arts.*

The artists mentioned above by Adeyemi were greatly influenced by African arts particularly the mask and woodcarvings tradition. Artists experimented with ideas, forms and materials as new ideas became available to them. Some ideas endured and others easily faded away. For instance, Fauvism, a movement that was essentially an expressive style lasted just no more than two years from 1905 to 1907. Rathus (2007) recounts that one of the most influential developments of the early twentieth century paintings was that the Fauves changed the painting tradition of their time by liberating colour from its traditional role of describing the natural appearance of an object. In this way, their work led to an increasing use of colour as an independent expressive element. The latter part of the Nineteenth century was not only a period that burgeoned with new industry and technology; it was also a period of new ideas, change, movement and development. For Rathus, transportation was developing at rapid speed, steam locomotion on land and sea added to the sense of dynamic change in the world. For scientists such as Darwin and Maxwell, the world and the people who inhabited it were becoming unstable as part of a non-static changing condition. Rathus (2007, p.35) states further that:

*Some of the artists who lived in this period responded to the same forces that affected the scientists. They saw about them a world of change, a world that could no longer be considered a static series of forms, spaces and actions. Cezanne's attempts to paint a kind of formal and spatial representation were part of a searching study that he carried out during the course of his entire painting*

*career. His initial inquiry into non-perspective of spatial representation has had a major influence on the painter from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present time.*

Knobler observed that during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Paris Pablo Picasso, and Georges Braque co-operated to extend the concept of the representation of a non-static experience. The result of their studies is "Analytical Cubism". This was Picasso's totem arts. In his quest to evolve and in his search for more conceptual arts and expression, Picasso also engaged in different fragmentations of two dimensional forms on a two dimensional picture plane and the resulting "Synthetic Cubism"(1912) is quite very vivid. With his pastel newsprint and coloured paper on canvas, suffice to state that both Picasso and Braque also included the use of tactile materials such as cloth, paper, newsprint and found objects in their synthetic cubist works and finally used tromp-l'oeil effects to create the illusion of real objects and textures such as the grain of wood.

Rothko's approach to art practice such as his "Mythomorphic" abstractionism, and his use of colour was much considered by critics and his collectors as very important even though this varied the structure of his paintings. This in effect has also led some artists since that period to ways of capturing emotions that are quite interesting, partly because of knowledge of infusing planes, while adapting or adhering to the idea of experimenting with archaic forms, modernist sensibilities and symbols as subject-matter. Rothko however, came in contact with the existence of surrealism, cubism, and abstraction arts of the modern era which he combined confidently with his forms as style. Rothko in his early career alongside his peers like Gottlieb, Newman, Solman and Graham

were influenced by and married the two European styles of Surrealism and abstraction as catalysts for their artworks.

Suffice to note that with his "Multiforms" a style which later came to the fore at the later period of his art practice, Rothko went for vivid and clear definitive forms, and he experimented with symmetrical rectangular blocks of two to three opposing or contrasting, but sometimes complementary colours (Plate 11, p.181). These post-modern sensibilities affect African cultural studies in the way it has become possible to evaluate historical cleavages from ideographic and endo-cultural perspectives. Periodization should be self referential in as much as it is rooted in the culture it addresses. In this always changing art landscape, it is possible to locate and divide coastal Yoruba art on three broad periods - the traditional, the colonial, and the postcolonial or contemporary periods. The term "traditional" was a suggestion of Ajetunmobi (1995, cited in Anon, n.d) who however, classified the entire arts of Africa on the basis of ancient traditions (Ajetunmobi, 1995, pp. 43-65).

The term 'contemporary' on the other hand, though of a convenient historical time and scope for the purpose of this research on coastal Yoruba iconographies, is too atomistic where the artistic traditions and cultural identities of any society or community are concerned. This rather simple; but broad classification of historical periods will be used for this study of coastal Yoruba arts.

In conclusion, the contention of this research project is that the terms "traditional" and "contemporary" art employed for defining Nigerian art and as such, of African cultural histories are not historically and epistemologically suitable. The argument put forward is that where art is a delimitator of fluid historical time, and more so, where it bears the mark of the time it was produced, understanding its histories will help in defining that art better. The inference

drawn from the above argument is that different traditions and social demands informed precolonial indigenous Nigerian art forms such as Ife, Benin, Igbo-ukwu among others. In that regard they signify different "traditions" and specific precolonial historical periods. The new art movements from these named periods may still be evident today but they cannot therefore be traditional within the conventions of histories and academic discourses. They are contemporary and it is in that regard that coastal Yoruba arts is considered in this study as consisting of three periods; precolonial, colonial and postcolonial or contemporary.

### 3:01 Visual Representation of Yoruba Oral (Verbal) Communication

This research draws on the various socio-cultural, socio-political and ritual activities of the coastal Yoruba people. This coastal region provides the primary sites and sources of materials for the analysis of the iconographies, signs, symbols, patterns, forms and motifs in coastal Yoruba artistic tradition. Thus, the paintings and drawings produced in this research respond and adhere to the conceptual frameworks and dynamics of change and continuity (see Plate 2, p.177). As rightly observed by Filani (2005), some of the radical reflections and innovations found in the artworks of coastal Yoruba artists can be read in terms of how their canvas speak (configure) in different series of design sensibilities, astute expressionists features, interpretations and meaning brought about because of Western education. All the symbolist ideas infused into the artistic processes noticeable in these research paintings and in the artworks of other Nigerian artists have come about because of Western education and the influx of foreign social and multicultural activities. A good number of influences came in the wake of colonialism and exposure to academic ideas, which have significantly influenced the modes of operations whilst in the studio in this research enquiry on the art (iconographies) of the coastal Yoruba. One important local influence that informed my studio practice is the world of Yoruba idioms which has been used as a reading template for understanding a particular aspect of the art of coastal Yoruba people (see chapter one).

Today (21<sup>st</sup> Century), the interpretation of coastal Yoruba signs, symbols, patterns, forms and motifs and combining these with foreign ideas and methods, or keeping the two forms separate have become so integrated into our routine

domestic lives that we frequently take it for granted that some of these influence have always been part of the community's routine existence. However, it is the repetition of signs and patterns such as those on the *Eyo-Adamu (Opanbata)* staff (Plate 14, p.181) and in *Adamu-Orisa* (masquerades) is an example of the way contemporary coastal Yoruba culture recognizes the recursive nature of cultural identities in continuities, repetitions, discontinuities, resumptions, disruptions, co-optations etc. This precisely is the reason why the idea of an exclusive modernism championed by the West is equally problematic in African art history.

An investigation of art forms by other cultures and the roles played by artists in shaping the cultural landscape of their communities makes the study of one's cultural art so crucially important. Although, we may have grown increasingly familiar with and become indifferent to the ubiquitous glare of indigenous Yoruba, Nigerian and African arts, their powers to construct and determine our view of the world should never be underestimated.

In traditional Yoruba society the different body decorations, (Plate 16, p. 193) reflect the normative idea of what it means to be modern and beautiful. The art inherent in this decoration identifies body adornment with aesthetics (*Ewa*) and presents us with a highly constructed image that inevitably informs and influences our everyday lives and perceptions. Indeed, the potential power of coastal Yoruba artistic imprints on modern Yoruba and Nigerian arts have hardly been recognised and analysed, yet its internal dynamics are alive in the works of indigenous artists and beyond. Such art forms, in their ancient and modern forms and interpretations, can be seen almost everywhere; they are a mirror through which the cultural values of the Yoruba community have been and are still reflected, locally and globally.

Coastal Yoruba arts connote several meanings and are coded and decoded in coastal Yoruba traditional iconographies with elements of ritual and ethnic connotations. Although, the configuration of the art forms in some cases is primarily imagistic and visual, they gradually change in connotations from ancient form to the researcher's own contemporary versions which draw inspiration from a combination of influences and can be presented and documented in one and more artistic forms. (Table 1 pp.182-191) captures a good number of coastal Yoruba words, decorative motifs, traditional patterns and signs explicitly resonate within Africa's traditions of masquerading performance, but bears the authorization of African modernity. These can be seen, and have been documented in various media from wooden carvings such as house-post or pillar-post, freestanding sculptures in homes and public places, to *Ifa*-divination trays, carved-masks, carved-doors etc.

As a space for performance, the coastal Yoruba patterns, signs and patterns have also proven to be strategic to the definition of Africa's cultural and symbolic capitals. However, the reality of the unique discursive space that developments in coastal Yoruba art has constructed is contested by Eurocentric scholars, who see the art forms as exhibiting a non-African identity, and that such arts have been greatly influenced by utilitarian values. These contesting views have led to a burst of new interpretations and uses in designs, signs, patterns and motifs. However, can this innovations or inversion in new order retain the existential ethos and spirit of coastal Yoruba art form? Such contestation is sustained when considered in relation to the interplanetary nature of contemporary culture. Even in this sense, the unfolding world as a phenomenon is a made-up indiscernible fence that is actually part of an artist's world as it is of others'.



At the social level, these iconographies have robustly been created in idealized forms; in found images seen in innovative design templates with new interpretations of the images in ornamental crafts such as pottery, batik-design work (*adire-eleko*), leather-work; mat-weaving, calabash decoration and gourd-carvings, basketry, and body adornments. The resulting images, like their ancient predecessors are painted or moulded on shrine walls and some public places such as *Obas'*, Chiefs' and traditional priests' palaces. The imageries or iconographies reveal modern and contemporary patterns of the coastal Yoruba, these will be analysed in this study. They connote different things and help to convey or define socio-cultural, rituals and political territories as well as communicate specific information. The use of sign languages is as old as humanity and in the case of the coastal Yoruba; they equally reflect the interweaving of a long history with its present. Indigenous coastal Yoruba arts and crafts have always been, and have greatly been influenced by the changes witnessed in recent times, and by internal developments, the region has seen. The experience of one artist is usually bound to of his or her fellows but vicariously shaped. These developments portray people who had long worked in the region right from its establishment, the coastal Yoruba patterns have so far sustained the understanding that art, as a cultural embodiment, is defined and canonized by its own community as legend and history point out (Smith, 1979).

Coastal Yoruba region was established by sojourners from the ancient Yoruba Kingdom of Ile-Ife who followed a mystic calabash that flowed on the river from the hinterland until it stopped and settled at a creek in Awori, the traditional capital of the coastal Yoruba. Since then the coastal Yoruba region has been the centre of economic activity from the establishment of old Lagos (*Eko*) by the colonial administration and by the Oba of Benin (Ajetunmobi, 2003), to the

formation of Nigeria in 1914. The creation of Lagos State in 1967, and the emergence of Lagos seaport and airports as the economic hubs of Nigeria and West Africa brought about tremendous development to the towns of the coastal Yoruba.

Adeyemi (2011) asserts that many modern and western influences can be seen on coastal Yoruba and African arts in the areas of documentation, and material utilization. While such influences reveal elements of philosophical stature, they make manifest the human ability to comprehend the world. Such comprehension is meaningful only within the consciousness of an epoch to which it relates and to a body of knowledge (such as through history and culture) that relates it to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new. The result is that sometimes, it has become difficult to define with clarity the differences in meaning in terms of how artists use and re-interpret ancient and indigenous art designs, signs, patterns and motifs.

As we can infer from above, the study of Yoruba artistic tradition has gone through various transformational stages in both practice and philosophy resulting in fresh ideas emanating from scholars and researchers whose contributions have clearly influenced how social and cultural traditions have been used and defined in this research. However, for the purpose of clarity, it is possible to break down the hermetic language of coastal Yoruba iconography into a number of units for the purpose of this study and for interpretation (see Plate 15, p.192).

A close analysis of the images and design concepts in this section of the thesis shows how the iconographical representations in the images and designs inform their functionality in relation to the culture and arts of the Yoruba people. The studio exploration part of this research has revealed that the artistic signs, patterns and motifs connote different things and functions among the different Yoruba groups in South-western Nigeria and Africa in general. The meaning and

functions of each art piece, designs and patterns depends largely on the role the arts play in reinforcing, celebrating and commemorating various stages of life. This study however, suggests that in the case of the coastal Yoruba, art also serves the important function of custodian of histories, culture and religion.

In post-independence Nigeria, art has continued to play these roles actively and visually as a vehicle for communicating and reinforcing tradition and modernity in social and ritual contexts. Many scholars have defined the roles and uses of art in different ways. According to Mekanjuola (2007) art is the product of creative human activity in which materials and themes, the signs, patterns and motifs in this section of the thesis capture oral art communication among the coastal Yoruba and this has been intensified by gradual breakdown of the conventional boundaries that once existed between the arts and social sciences. These words in proverbs and patterns have been gathered into forms to convey an idea, emotion, or visually interesting form. In other words, art could be visual arts and take the form of ornamentations such as gourds, crown, and staff of office, swords, and crafts as well as other visual exploits that combine different materials or forms.

### **3:02 Communicating Coastal Yoruba Culture through Verbal and Physical Arts**

Yoruba arts in recent past have witnessed many changes. As one might expect, these changes are quite noticeable in the ways artist approach the physical arts and the verbal (oral communication), especially when used to communicate specificity and power of symbols and certain art forms. However, this research is inspired by ancient and modern artists in various types of abstractionists tendencies exemplified in academic discourses. Based on this

account, the images are re-interpreted and packaged in the form of visual communication as I have attempted in my study/paintings.

The imageries seen in different templates reveal for instance, a unique reconciliation of my self-declarative innovations on iconographies and techniques of "avant-garde" painters that have helped form this inter-disciplinary field of study. The several innovations ushered in this research and in Nigeria through colonialism, post-colonialism, education and modernism have brought together a variety of contemporaneous representations and engagement by artists in Nigeria, beginning from the work of Aina Onabolu. As Adepegba (1995) and Adepegba (2007) state regarding the analysis and classification of modernism in Nigerian arts, whereas modern coastal Yoruba visual arts may be defined as beginning from the point of contact with the West, it also incorporates "survival of traditional past" and neo-traditional manifestations in the contemporary.

These, to a considerable extent serve as basis on which coastal Yoruba art is rooted in a traditional and post-modernist conjunction. Coastal Yoruba artists relate closely to cubists' sense of vision rather than the 'unconscious', 'subconscious' or 'preconscious' imagery, thus, it has not been convenient for me to work elaborately on techniques of spontaneity as well as explore the various forms and contexts depicted in verse and images based on 'heroic' or 'epic' subjects beyond the symbols.

Thus in one sense, I resolved within the studio and canvas how both these tendencies in painting, mixed media, and in drawing can at least be used relatively in re-creating, deconstructing and harmonising the rubrics of cubism in new templates. The replication of 'archetypes' in the form of narratives or performance art became very obvious in the paintings but while controlling this on the canvas the drape effects relatively speak of their materiality and essence. The

iconographies and ornamentations discovered helped to chart and explain the meaning and evolution of this relatively new and constantly developing area of academic study.

In the past, writers and explorers argued the wider perspective of arts, while in the 20<sup>th</sup> century critics and art historians have discussed the crafts in different contexts as a medium of communication. Among the Yoruba, some cultural art forms are associated with spiritual powers. Communication, as simply defined in Makinde (2004) involves exchange of information and ideas; this could be the exchange of information between individuals. Thus, the use of arts in different public and private spaces can sometimes make or evoke meanings beyond their immediate usage or application, and irrespective of how people view the works of individual artists. This is the position adopted by Makanjuola (2007) who has argued that among the Yoruba people, oral art is part of visual communication.

As Adebowale (2012) has pointed out, many of the physical arts of the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria are translations of words, narratives, idioms and words coined into painting interpretations in visual forms. Such words, narratives, and histories come from different sources such as proverbs, wise-sayings, cultural witticisms, parables and from observations and comments on nature or the physical and metaphysical environments. *Eyo-Adamu-Orisa* (Plate 16, p.193) captures artistic performance of masquerade in a visual and dynamic re-ordering of the performativity of coastal Yoruba traditions of masquerading, yet it bears the authorization of African modernity. The translation of these verbal or oral word constructs into artistic images (patterns and motifs) differs from community to community and from artist to artist but because they contain ideas, signs, patterns, stimulus and information that are common across all sections of coastal Yoruba culture, many people understand what the art forms mean, say and

connote. Reads (1994) (cited in Makanjuola, 2007) argues that the impression of what can, or cannot be called art depends on whether or not it is expressive.

The man, who speaks, potentially becomes an artist since the words he speaks makes or expresses feelings and invites responses. For the Yoruba, verbal expressions, emotions or statements are specifically meant to be artistic as people are expected to speak and interact poetically. However, such poetic communications can be better expressed and preserved along with other aspects of culture. Therefore, the art objects populate social, ritual, political, and economic spaces from the statues and carvings in palaces, doorpost and shrines to the designs used on clothes for ordinary and special occasions such as the costumes worn by priests and performers during religious rituals and other public performances. Among the kinds of communication described above, the human head and its significance culturally and in all private and public interactions, play an important part in Yoruba art patterns, signs, and motifs.

### **3:03 The Head in Yoruba and African Culture and Art**

The head is the site and seat of power and destiny among the Yoruba of South-west Nigeria, likewise with other ethnic groups such as the Benin, Igbo, Ijaw, Fulani and the Hausa of Nigeria. These Nigerian societies adorn the head with many decorative embellishments from the designs of hairstyles for men and women to the kinds of caps/hats and scarves worn. This accounts for why most Africans societies place much value in decorating the head. In the Yoruba society and cosmology, the head, human and otherwise, is regarded as the '*eleda*,' fortune or destiny. Destiny is an esoteric phenomenon.

There are two types of heads, the visible head (*ori-ode*) and the inner head (*ori-inu*) or destiny. The Yoruba believe that one's inner head or *ori-inu* as Sheba (2002) highlights, decides one's fate in life and the afterlife. The head is symbolical and endowed with a lot of sensitivity; it houses the vital sensory organs. Most importantly, it is the region of the intellect. Overall, the head serves all other part of the body and can be conceived differently as dominant in relation to other parts of the body. The head among the Yoruba people is the essence of being and destiny, an ideal symbol for the strength of the individual and thus used as both the aesthetic and symbolic representation of the whole body. Thus, it is the relevance of the head to the whole body that determines how African artists use it to express their creative prowess and aesthetic sensibilities.

An example of such relevance in practice can be seen in the imageries produced in the studio component of this research, and in body decorations and scarification of the Mangbetu of Democratic Republic of Congo. Other examples are the *Iwu*, the scarification and tattooing tradition of Edo people of Nigeria, which distinguishes them from other societies in Nigeria and beyond. The Yoruba people and other African societies attach great premium on the head. This is the reason why the head is superior and is usually regarded with respect and honour, dressed in creative and distinctive ways as Fajuyigbe (2007) points out. In this context, the body and the head in African art and imagination help to explain why the Yoruba people give time to decorating the head in social and public contexts.

### **3:04 Headdresses, Status Symbols, Motifs and Patterns**

Headdresses are very significant among the Yoruba people of Nigeria and are used as status symbols and motifs to denote, identify or show differentiation

among ethnic affinities and associations, most especially among cults groups. A headdress denotes the status and powers held by each individual in a particular community. In reality, they sometimes serve as protection. Head wears, worn by cults in the form of *ori-inu* (the inner head) and those worn for daily activities or on special occasion are important features of how Yoruba art straddles the functional and aesthetic spheres.

Such headdresses among the coastal Yoruba people also expresses normative idea of what it means to be modern and how people are identified based on class or status. They express shared and deeply held cultural beliefs and social values. Similarly, among the Awori of coastal Yoruba in Lagos State, ritual headdresses display individual uniqueness and are worn by traditional priests, by *Obas* and different categories of local chiefs in rituals that are designed to evoke spiritual protection for farmers and the community during harvesting seasons.

The motifs, patterns, colours and shapes chosen for the headdresses depict the class, status, and section of each of the leading functionaries in rituals. The signs, symbols and motifs in this research serve as a vehicle for expressing the arts of the Yoruba people. Their importance underscores why and how they are useful and are used or considered to communicate specific cultural values, a common feature of indigenous arts all over the world. The decoration of hair among the Yoruba with ornaments is very common with all other ethnic groups of Nigeria. However, their degree of distinctiveness is very crucial and is determined by the difference in shared values from one society to another, and associated with the aesthetic goals and particular functions they serve. The approach to how the head, cap, or scarves are used helps to endow an artist's creations with their distinguishing features; they usually depict individualistic tendencies by artists since all art is an individual expression of culture.



Whilst culture differs from place to place, so also does each art and craft product or expressions look unique and different from others? For instance in Africa the link between hairdo and physical cum spiritual beauty is of great importance. That is why the hairstyles are distinctive and symbolically designed to communicate the importance, personality and status of the wearers. Hairstyles however, denote social relations, healthcare and spiritual well-being and wholesomeness among the Yoruba. This is a common practice across Africa; among the Chokwe society of Angola for example, specified hairstyles (complete with design patterns and materials), are prescribed and worn exclusively by chiefs and certain high-ranking personalities. Interestingly, the sort of stylistic aesthetics in Chokwe in Angola abound in other traditions on the African continent.

Some high-chiefs in Chokwe are specially (colourfully) decorated and adorned with a horned hairstyle. Sometimes the horns are held in high esteem, they are stylistically shaped with braided or bundled hair, which protrude from the side or top of the head in a straight or slightly curved manner. Another striking example of hair as status symbol is the hairstyle and skull elongation practised among the Mangbetu of North-eastern Congo. They devote a lot of time and talent to body ornamentation and a variety of hairstyles. In this community, the wives of chiefs and wealthy individuals display their high ranks defined by elaborate spherical hairstyles, while other women sport the elongated basket-like hairstyle with a halo at the crown. Hair elongation is a status symbol among the Mangbetu ruling class, now it has extended into a common ideal of beauty among other African nations such as Ghana and Cameroon (Palmenaer, 2002).

So far, the conclusion drawn here is that the several lots of coastal Yoruba words, physical arts and patterns portray a fascinating, wide-ranging and various expressions of coastal Yoruba and Nigerian/African art modernity. Although, it

appears as and expropriation of western modes of artistic practice and its art history, its expression as a cultural referent overwrites the dominating schemata of the West. The intrinsic limitations and costs of practice led me to a consideration of the miniature as a format, but as a researcher, I was conscious that part of my aim is to reflect antecedent forms in new order. Suffice to say that, this section further interpretation and coding of some crafts/words, patterns and motifs regarded as a brand of "traditional art" that sustain modes of practices known as "souvenir art". Cornelius Adepegba (1995) has in addition, provided a categorization of modern tendencies in the visual arts of Nigeria, which brings together a vast variety of contemporaneous representations and engagements by artists in Nigeria. For Adepegba, then, whereas modern coastal Yoruba and perhaps African visual arts may be defined as beginning from the point of contact with the West, it also incorporates "survivals of traditional past" and neo-traditional manifestations in the contemporary. This chapter analyses and presents new interpretations of coastal Yoruba art forms in Western contexts such as the dialectical structure enshrined in the art history of the coastal Yoruba. In the subsections on art works, the first stands for realistic art; the second stands for extensions of the arts of pre-colonial era adapted for new reading; especially those inspired by workshops steered by missionaries or enthusiasts from the West, whose ideas are often driven by fundamentalist obsessions to preserve the purity of practice in African visual arts.

The third and fourth categorizations reveal iconographies created out of curiosities and the exquisite drawing of coastal Yoruba words revealed in new templates designed to capture coastal Yoruba lineal trajectory, via ancient, middle and modern periods. According to Adepegba, the above reflection may be referred to as neo-traditional art; and are mainly new local forms that portray

Western conventions whilst revealing some of the characteristics learned in training centres. However, the new inversions created in this research may help to refute prejudices and renunciations of cultural modernism in coastal Yoruba art history as a practice that is located within the framework of Euro-American rationalization.

#### 4:01 Studio Exploration

The studio practice section of the research thesis sets out to reflect on, as well as explore the thematic approach adopted in studio work. This chapter unveils paintings and drawings, and at the same time reflects on how patterns and motifs are used and re-interpreted in my own contemporary paintings. Because the researcher “perceives how or reflects the relationship between the world and the senses that relate the world at the same time” (Steingold, 2011, p.3) the studio work created in this research is inspired by symbols, signs, patterns and motifs of the coastal Yoruba art forms. I have worked with mixed media, employed improvisation and infusion of found objects all coordinated in novel form. The resulting paintings and drawings make use of traditional Yoruba art forms but rendered in a contemporary context.

In the process I have tried to create new visual language, vocabulary, colour, design and forms that could ultimately evoke a profound “aesthetic emotion” (Warburton, 2003, p.10) based on indigenous coastal Yoruba motifs, signs and patterns. Bell argues that the power to produce an aesthetic emotion is inherent in significant form, and that the attempt to create significant forms in painting is a combination and engagement with form, colour, line and design. Although Warburton seems to be more interested in significance than in “subject-matter” (Warburton, 2003, p.10), he relates all named factors to all forms of visual arts. The goal for Bell and some notable art theorists of the twentieth century was to see how and why form tends to lean towards contemporary movements in the creation of art form, as a more profound element than the presentation of body of - or block of work (Warburton, 2003).

Of importance to this research and studio practice, is the evolving of a new idea of visual templates, or re-creating unique forms with various painting mediums involving action. Action research is a practical reflective approach or process involving individuals solving problems either by leading or working with others in teams or as community practice (Steingold, 2011). This action research method brings together theory, research, and practice. It is a method of enquiry, which requires reflection, interpretation and responsiveness leading to new interpretation. Suffice to say that improvisation and intuitionism are methodologies that play a central role or are key factors within the process. Reflection, evaluation, analysis and judgements made at different stages of the process have been integrated whenever it is necessary to do so and all contribute to the finished images. Thus the research methods used support enquiry, are reflective, interpretive and phenomenological. Steingold (2011, p.4) posits that, "These methods are generative and are employed at different phases of research enquiry. Through observation, reflections, analysis and documentation on practice, the implicit factors will be revealing, providing information and communication into the nature of painting".

The painting process involves deep thinking, decision-making, actions, reflections and intuitions. Some of the experiments were repeated with intention to reveal inherent themes behind the symbols or signs of coastal Yoruba art. This section of the thesis sets out the thematic analysis, colour usage, materials/collage and tools used in the execution of the paintings.

#### **4:02 Materials used in the Studio**

The tools used in this research are effective and suitable: a pair of scissors, a sharp cutting knife, set of oil colours, sponge or rags, improvised plastic and tin foil

cupcakes for diluting water and adhesives with glue and colours. Another material is a small-improvised plastic container with a pointed outlet for pouring glues into different containers, crayons and charcoal.

At this point, my initial thoughts were to gather materials suitable for analysing and exploring the research artworks. More importantly, each decision regarding materials and artistic purpose such as choosing and explaining the relevance of an oil pigment was necessary. The reason was not simply the glossiness of oil pigment; it was suitable for my purpose. Suffice to say, that there is the need to search for innovativeness and challenging boundaries beyond the edge of traditional and conventional painting mediums or styles. To this end, I sought to expand my techniques and methods within the scope of what I found available. The notion of aesthetics and authorship are often closely connected with how materials are utilised. Nevertheless, each work of “art” is explicitly identified with an individual artist’s materials, in this case, by linking the synthesis of information and creative ideas with other non-traditional art materials. In other words, when discussing a painting, sculpture or novel it is relatively easy to identify its maker, his/her name by the utilization of materials since the material used explicitly resonates with the mood, person and place/geographical location.

#### **4:03 Colours**

In this research colour on the one hand refers to visual image, the functions of beauty, which ultimately reveals the inherent qualities of pigment. Colour, on the other hand can also be classified as a raw material and functions as a vehicle for exploring the project. However, the choice of colour is dependent on the inspiration generated, conceived and interpreted from either the conscious or the

unconscious impulse of the researcher. Colour is also used in this research as a form of catchment designed to create atmosphere, meaning, dazzling effects and identity. Sometimes I had to apply colour composition to changing circumstances in the studio process, terms such as 'painting into painting', 'wet on wet' have been used rather loosely in this research to distinguish images related to critical discourse by art historians and critics (claims, assertions and postulations) but which were personal to me, the researcher.

In practice while an oil colour with combination of fabric or new-prints helped to convey meaning in the paintings and in the colour choice, some resulted from the combination of other component materials, which equally raises questions such as what, why, how, and where regarding the various patterns, images and motifs the research I drew upon in design and painting/drawing. These questions have been answered visually and graphically in the studio work.

The colour pallet runs concurrently from neutral earth hues to warm reds and indigo blue. Colours employed in this research were designed to effect and evoke "aesthetic emotion". This in one sense, helped in creating specific sensational emphasis in each of the works thereby creating interpretations of the old in a new world such as evoking some vivid antique memories such as '*Egungun-Alarinjo* painting' (Plate 39, p.200). Colour is therefore very crucial in the production of the body of work in this research. Adebowale (2012) posits in a personal communication - that colour is attitude, brilliance and good behaviour as perceived by the Yoruba oral tradition.



(Plate 19, colour mixture) Largely, the use of colour and placement is indescribable, as such, it resonates and generates many

questions and the resolution of ideas and questions generally led to new

interpretations and messages. Colour, which gives a feeling of or sense of the environment we live in, like coastal areas of Lagos State and Africa, and the Islamic art, are considered in this research. The combination of colour and materials generated different images such as the representations of Yoruba *Egungun* masquerade (Plates 38, p.200; 39 p.200; 43 p.203; and 46 p.204) with different shades of red and motifs.

Itten (1996, p.75) discusses the concept of symbolic colour, stating that “among historical people, there have been styles using colours as symbolic values only, either to identify social strata or castes, or as symbolic terms for mythological or religious ideas”. However, the representation of the masquerade with an array of red hues in the stated Plates above is expressive of, and is a record of sensation, yet attesting to the symbolic nature of the image. The alternation between figure, information and ground reveals definitive paintings (images) which reflect Eighteenth century line of shift and the emphasis towards the move from mental to external in cultural perception.

(Plate 15, p.192) for example reflects some words from Yoruba oral poetry and chants reflective of the ritual context and association in some art materials. In studio, the drawings made capture forms considered as eccentrics from one perspective, innovative from another angle thereby situating the process and products within a broader set of ‘theories’ and practices on Yoruba iconography which are quite vivid or evident in this research. The method of using geometric shapes to denote feelings and idealised figures, which consciously express a feeling of space of the mind, a space of distortion by dreams, were influenced by and derived from Western abstract art.

The studio experiments divide this study into a complex circle of two different approaches based essentially on works created with pallet-knife and



mixed media. Intuition and imagination formed the basis of creative ideas from this studio exploration. After all, a step into the 'unknown' can propel creativity. In each work produced in this research, the colour composition has gone through a thorough process inspired by contemporary and traditional Yoruba art forms.

#### 4:04 Neutral Colours

Professionally, both white and black are primarily neutral colours. In this research, I have dwelt much on neutral hues in the works (paintings) to effect



relaxation and (Plate 20) coolness in a monochromatic scheme, such as the use of ivory, off-white, alabaster, beige, grey, and cerulean blue. The use of neutral colours gives the works sensual and emotional feel.

Practically, while colour in this research entails space, clear, and simple reading, it retains the monochromatic tendencies, which give or create a suitable background and a good colour contrast for paintings. Suffice to say that, the use of creamy soft hues helps to co-ordinate and define the choice for cosy traditional spaces. Importantly in the *Egungun* series, '*Fragment of Tradition (I and II)*' and '*Royalty*', (Plate 40, p.201 and 42, p.202) cream hues or chromatics are used and are good examples of where soft cream background has been used to create suitable contrast in this research.

#### 4:05 Blues

Cerulean blue, indigo or cobalt blues are very prominent in the execution of the paintings. This is very dominant because of the prevalence of these colours in the traditional Yoruba *adire* fabrics. Most *adire* fabric designs such as traditional

*Aso-oke* apparel, *Opanbata Eyo* staff and woven-mats are decorated with incisions dyed in indigo (*galura*) pigment. The colour pigments used by coastal Yoruba artists are highly symbolic and spiritual to some extent, and are sourced from plants known as *Elu-aja*, an organic dye from *indigofera*, (Adeyemi, 2008). Adeyemi posits that "the rich blue dye with the coppery lustre is the undisputed king of dyes being the oldest and most colourfast of natural dyes known to man, calming and in every part of the world" (Adeyemi, 2012, p.15).

In addition, blue chromatics sometimes come into play to emphasise deep and challenging periods and to reflect contrast, as well as to denote clarity of message. The light tints of Prussian blue chromatic denote dark periods in lifetime, which justify their prevalence in Yoruba patterns, motifs and symbols. This in effect, allows for artistic decoration and inventive processes of dyeing material among the Yoruba where *adire* decoration and production is very common. Importantly, lighter blues convey a different message, inspire communication, and are adopted to create and achieve flexibility and depth in the compositions. The darker indigo and shade of blues with tints of cerulean blues are for strong dramatic effects, and sometimes, for detailing. This is specially used in the paintings to create a feeling of cosy intimacy instead of the illusion of spaciousness. In most of the paintings here, a contrast is employed in the use of the darker shades of blue on some neutral colours such as light orange, gold, and pink and light purple.

#### **4:06 Yellows**

The chromatic yellows used within the studio exploration helps to give cheerful effects to the paintings, and to create fine finishing in the detailing of

airy sensations in the pictorial compositions. Yellow hues or tints of a glowing effect help to create a radiant joy in the art practice and tints of it enhance the organic and natural quality of the works. Yellows in this research are applied mostly to lift the spirit and sometimes to emphasise and radiate the sunny vitality, dynamism and excitement that characterize coastal Yoruba public events, be they ritual or social. Works such as *Royal Instinct* (Plate 40, p.201), *Egungun Alarinjo* (Plate 39, p.200), *Agbada-nla* (Plate 44, p. 203) are good examples of the use of, and the interplay of yellow chromatic.

#### **4:07 Browns**

Brown hues or chromatics is often considered drab or dull. Interestingly the use of browns has enabled me to create a delicious sophistication as well as inject connotations of mysteries and earthly riches in the artworks. Part of the studio experimentation involved research into a systematic approach on how to use browns to create good imagery whilst effecting sensational feelings of sweet matter such as reddish-browns, bluish-browns, chocolate browns (*raw-umber*) and other brown hues that exist in the spectrum of browns.

The use of browns in this research helped to compliment the warm reds and contrast favourably with neutral colours and sometimes with yellows of high intensity. The umber or chocolate browns give the paintings a perfect backdrop for grey, cream, white and the yellows. Shades of browns are very vivid and sophisticated as in '*Pillar-post*' series, '*Fragments of Tradition II*' pages 148, and 157. The warm beauty and ambience expressed in some of the works show the effect of brown scheme on works inspired by nature, a good many of which were rendered with earth brown late rite or sand bonded with water-based adhesive. I

found out that brown mixtures or applications of brown hues can take place in almost all mixed media works and this is simply because Yoruba arts are influenced by earth colours and are a reflection of the Yoruba interactions with their physical environments, especially the earth.

#### **4:08 Reds**

In this research, reds are specifically used to add strength and to create a special quality and impression. In most of the artworks produced, red hues ranging from orange reds and yellowish reds sometimes surface unconsciously. Intentionally, the works in mixed media reflect strong adaptation of reds used intentionally to create focal points and effects. I infused works with red chromatic hues to challenge convention, to call viewer's attention into the paintings, and to limit the use of red colour, whilst red speaks volume in the creation of communication and messages.

The colour palette is always very rich in hues of reds; this, is considered in this research as a strong element in discussing meaning and communicating specifics. Applying the hues of reds enabled the iconographies to speak the language of contemporary art. These actions specifically sought to demystify styles and to challenge colour theories, they are also used to effect vicarious sensations in detailed themes, forms and compositions when the situations arise. To many African and Yoruba peoples, red colour means different things. In some Yoruba communities, it connotes danger. In some places, it means good season, success and achievement, while in some communities it stands for strength and youthful energy. It sometimes conveys a spiritual message and presence. In the studio, I

experimented with how reds hues can be used to create a better understanding of vibrancy, excitement, dynamism and visual impact.

#### 4:09 Mixed Media/Collage

In this research, the use of improvisation is specifically to charge the images with new ideas in the form of avant-garde. Such improvisation reveals reality of everyday activities and the reality of Yoruba art. Fabrics, canvas and wood with paints and sand are simply different when used in creating work of art; these tendencies are expressed stylistically in the 'collage' medium. Mixed media and collage have been adopted in rhythmic and idealised format as most of the paintings and drawings show. This action is very effective as the quest for innovation and originality led to new interpretations and trends of contemporary art. Indeed, the series of mixed media works extend beyond mere conventional painting or practices. The improvisations with sands, ropes and fabrics are largely intentional and systematic in approach; this was designed and ultimately led to the creation of pleasing "exquisite" compositions. While engaging with all objects through action I explored new terrain to see how all these converge and how my mixed media processes could be used to situate my practice within contemporary Yoruba art. My use of fabrics on canvas and fabrics and the sticking of materials to the painting surfaces were designed to test or examine the relationship between canvas and wood and other materials in collage.

As Sausmarez (2002, p.15) submits "Collage is an assemblage of materials which have been stuck together to form a new structure or image (*French collar to stick*)." In recent times, the collaging of various forms of adhesives or fabric materials fixed on surfaces or grounds of any kind has extended to mixed media.

Collecting materials ranging from found objects such as fabrics for collage seems very tedious and time-consuming in most cases, but the finished work is usually interesting.

It was difficult collecting sands due to the nature of the environment. This did not help matters, as I had to look for sands at building sites and garden parks for mixed media production. Some interesting materials used range from used wood, tree bark, leaves, dried grasses, shells, paints, fabrics, sand, sawdust, scraps and metals. The fabrics used in the mixed media pieces are found objects some of which are old dresses, upholstery, scraps, strings, printing paper and cotton fabrics, leather, towelling, old plain cloth, nuts, bolts, costume jewellery, buckles and inexpensive trinkets.

#### **4:10 Supports and Adhesives**

In carrying out the studio research practice, I took into consideration the supports, surfaces or grounds, adhesives, tools and finishing that were available to me. Often times, the support dictated the type of objects or collage to apply in order to achieve a successful artwork from conception to finishing. Sometimes, I employed primed canvas or wood panel to execute the work. In such instances the canvas is primed and systematically approached, the images are represented using stylisation with wood and ropes alongside pallet knife with oil pigment on hard wood panel, Masonite plywood size 1"x2", 2"x2", chipboard, strawboard, stretched canvas, or any other flat non-warping surface.

## 4:11 Summary

Field trips had great influence on this research and were important in generating information on the art tradition prevalent in *Egungun* practice among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria. This is especially in area of orality, such as *Ijala* cult art or hunter's song-art practices among the Yoruba. Oral interview and discussions with local artists, traditional rulers, priests and art collectors further revealed the inherent messages, communication or information found in the signs, symbols and motifs. One notable example was information surrounding the *Ami* mark or incision marks why they are used, how they are used and what they mean. This discussion focused on the meaning and functions of the design elements in the *Ami* marks found in the areas visited. The studio practice does not only reveal the visual appeal of the craft designs and costumes used in public ceremonies and functions but the shrine paintings, and drawings based on *Ona* art tradition which typifies the Yoruba, are also brought under the searchlight.

The visual properties such as forms, styles, and composition of the Yoruba art forms have been explored extensively through studio exploration. One of the more important findings is the fact that the integration of symbolic images and design patterns on costume is an essential feature of visual art and communication in coastal Yoruba culture. The second is the prevalence of social and lineage distinctions in how and who uses some motifs and patterns and how the high level of creativity in fabrics and wood reveal a unique approach in Yoruba visual arts.

## 4:12 Methods and Techniques

This section is concerned with materiality, techniques and methods adopted in this research. It further present the stages of operations while in the studio and

explores issues that relate specifically to contemporary art practice. There is inevitably some overlap, however, between aspects of materiality and methodology as a medium, and studying the links in Yoruba art globally.

Thus, what is acceptable at different times in this research and under different conditions remains a matter of concern for the researcher and broadly speaking, coastal Yoruba art has become increasingly open and permissive of new and foreign influences (see assessment of the signs, symbols and patterns in chapter three). Such concerns highlight why it is important to study and document the meaning and contexts of Yoruba art forms. The use of collages, sands and rope as ways of solving and presenting information on symbols, motifs and patterns has long been established yet the claims and assertions made by formalists regarding modernist paintings and painters goes back to the origins of early twentieth century and of these technologies. Although many of their ideas have continued to challenge existing art theories, Bells and Collingwood's theories (Warburton, 2003) have been important in the study of forms, representation, and the interdisciplinary approaches they took in the study of visual art. However, the collection of newsprints and fabrics taken directly from used or discarded materials can be used to represent an artwork in a way that is utterly different from conventional materials.

The practical component of this research examines paintings and techniques with the intention to analyse and document the inherent approaches involved in the execution of the paintings. The research methodology combines a number of critical methodologies that include close analysis of the paintings, mixed media, and drawings. As such, this type of approach mainly relies on forms of 'qualitative analyses'. Qualitative analysis is viewed as speculative in nature and equally allows or gives room for personal interpretation and the consideration of theoretical



issues and subjective conjectures in its investigation of culture (Chase, 1999) and activities such as art. However, it is the relatedness of materials to each other and how mixed media works cum-paintings adhere to the dynamics of forms in contemporary coastal Yoruba art practice that is explored in this research.

This section of the thesis specifically addresses and discusses the different methods adopted; improvised tools and materials used in the creation of most of the mixed media, and at the same time, the analysis and classification of the paintings and drawings into different department. The productions of the artworks that constitute this research have been designed to trace and reflect upon how the combination of different materials and approaches, and instinctual feelings for form and effects can stimulate and drive the making of artwork. The techniques adopted in the execution of the paintings are mixed media with oil pigment, found objects, and pallet-knife with layers of impasto on different painting surfaces. From the archive of works the simplest and most certainly the earliest methods employed in producing some of the mixed media works series ranged from using Masonite boards and wood combined with fabrics and pigments using pallet knife.

This method dates back to China to about 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is a common knowledge that local and foreign techniques, processes and ideas inspired Nigerian artists and influenced most especially Yoruba artists and their themes particularly in painting. In the past, these tendencies were hidden from other families as trade secrets. However, the paintings and drawings made so far in this research reveal influences associated with art workshops organised by European expatriates in Nigeria who embraced this form of art education as a necessary tool for teaching artists how to engage with different approaches to the use and re-creation of indigenous motifs and imageries in their arts. Art practices based on experiences and influences from these foreigner-facilitated workshops ultimately helped to

preserve ideas and where necessary, they transformed traditional ideas into new forms and interpretations. This is the start of Nigerian contemporary arts and artists.

Some of the paintings in this research rendered on Masonite board were used to explore the suitability of other painting surfaces or grounds, in order to reaffirm or contest the claims made by painters. As Sausmarez (2002) argued, some factors have earlier been discussed which ultimately dominated artists' perception about visual creativity. He further opined that artists could reject conventions but be aware that the ideas, which emanate from their own experiences, are the basis on which artists should consider what constitutes valid information. All the statements mentioned above have served as bases on which this research tested some assertions and postulations made for postmodern paintings by formalists such as experimentation on the real, visual and emotion. This was essential in how I used personal intuition, judgement, observation, thoughts and ideas based on and derived from practice, and not merely on theory. This approach is inevitable for any researcher seeking the solution to artistic problems encountered in studio practice (Sausmarez, 2002). Experimentations often led to action based on intuitive and self-analytical exploration with various materials such as found objects collected explicitly for the exploration of the paintings in this research.

There has also been a synthesis of traditional experiential or anecdotal cultural practices and art theories. Of the former, the research has drawn from a system of Yoruba cultural values, legends and stories, myths and histories of Yoruba civilisation as basis for constructive academic discourse. Thus, the processes of producing these paintings were not only accentuated with new discoveries, there was the need to tackle challenges through a Nigerian artist's sensitivity to cultural idioms and motifs and the combination of practical and

theoretical explorations. The outcome led to the practice of returning to individual pieces periodically as part of my working process and research methodology.

For instance, some of the paintings, which I explored with wood, were very difficult to bring to completion and details were difficult to achieve. Sometimes their technical and methodological combinations yielded no good result. These discoveries have however, given way for a large number of new discoveries and development of new possibilities. These have helped to broaden my visual sensibilities and acquisition of new practice vocabularies.

#### 4:13 Priming Section



Plate 22: *Canvas Preparation*

Tools used in the studio were chosen for their convenience and suitability and to enhance fluidity of hand movement and action while creating effects artistically. The process and studio action speaks to the ineffable quality of practical experience gathered overtime. This led to works that can be broadly described as being often characterized by ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. I often considered materials made of good quality that are full of potentials, which can at any time yield good sensation and result in instantiation. My approach in surface priming aimed for the creation of a design template on which to tease out the intended aesthetic features in a gradual process. At times I used a rough-

drapery to enhance surface quality rendition while co-ordinating evident aspect of my thoughts leading to the finished piece.



*Plate 23: Improvised Pallet*



*Plate 24: Wood Construction Process*

Above painting pallet is an improvised wooden surface primed with glue solvent to prevent colour penetrating through it. The range and variety of tools used in the studio complemented the yearning for novelty whilst contending with barrier to the imagination such as the constraints of gravity and durability. Arguably and like many artists elsewhere, I consider my research in the light of Rieser's postulation that while many artists employ or choose to revisit the plurality of the modernist and constructivist arts projects, many have filtered their vision through the post-modern knowingness of our era (Reiser, 2011).

In essence, this research on indigenous coastal Yoruba iconography has been filtered through Rieser's knowingness. It is therefore necessary to treat the objects not as marquetry is for larger works, but as celebrations of the small and medium, but perfectly formed and cared for pieces that allow for smooth mixing of pigment.

#### **4:14 Present Innovation and Development: Thinking Through Materiality**

Thus far, this research has dealt with coastal Yoruba arts and crafts as a case study through which to argue the case for individual authenticity, authorship and originality within broader contexts of contemporary art. The research action

at re-defining and re-interpreting the symbolism and patterns of coastal Yoruba art as 'real' can only lead us to conclude that materiality is not simply about physical objects, but as the processes and relations which give rise to materiality. As it is in this sense then, every society is full of its potential forms of materiality, which can at any time result in instantiation of a particular art.

To unpick the wide-range of issues which I set out to explore in the research and to effectively address some deceptively simple questions raised by art-critics, art historians and artists, I conducted some interviews in the field; there were several questions on the origins and patterns of coastal Yoruba art. 'What informs the practice as research?' In addition, 'What conceptual framework is the research based on?' This section takes account of these questions while the images reveal inherent thematic strands, meanings and functions of arts of the coastal Yoruba. These questions are explored in the paintings. Thus, the noticeable response, stylistics, techniques and ideas shown in the paintings for instance are exemplified in Plate 48, p.205 and Plate 49, p.206.

While in the field, I sought to re-create found iconographies and for which a sizable collection of words, historical and legendary motifs, words from *Ijala* chants and drum poetry have been creatively woven into narratives reflected or captured in Abstract Expressionism. These have also been re-interpreted as historical phenomenon and occasionally heightened in the particular intensity of some images. A sizable number of iconographies collected reveal myths, idioms, oral praises, adages, and historical discourses. Suffice to say that one of the variations and inversion in the series of mixed media work dwelt on re-interpretation of Yoruba migration tales, palace life, myth surrounding the deity, *Orunmila*, on matters of existence and ritual engagement executed in Abstract Expressionism.

(Plates 47, p. 205 and 48, p.205) demonstrate inherent innovativeness and originality of the research; both are a template for discussing, presenting and interpreting the uniqueness and originality of my own interpretations within a qualitative pictorial domain of contrast, materiality and hue. The paintings are my response to the research questions set out in Chapter 1 and on issues and counter-arguments encountered on field research on the challenges in replicating iconographies in a more artistic consciousness. I drew comparisons with other well-known art theories and arts. Three key stages of the process were used to cater to both the physical images and the readings of every action that emanate on the surfaces of the canvas (see analysis of paintings, page 207-209).

Part of the research process is the systematic presentation of binary situations in which images are distinctively configured within contemporary norms, and the same time being able to dismiss the possibility of transforming motifs, patterns and symbols into a more rhythmic format that can seat comfortably within the realm of global art. The three stages of expositions discuss inherent themes and compositions. The three stages set out in this research and which facilitate in-depth discussion of these images, iconographies and words are as follows; *'The period of experimentation and exploration with found objects'*, *'The period of duality, exploration of materials'*, and *'The period of stylistics and definition of terms'*.

Having said much of the principal methodologies adopted or employed in the creative process, which evidences are documented and delineated I will also present an in-depth information on the experiments and techniques adopted, latest information on what, and how events unfolded in the studio and most likely the nature of working in the studio, while in the production stages or process. I approached my subject on the conviction that the questions raised while in the

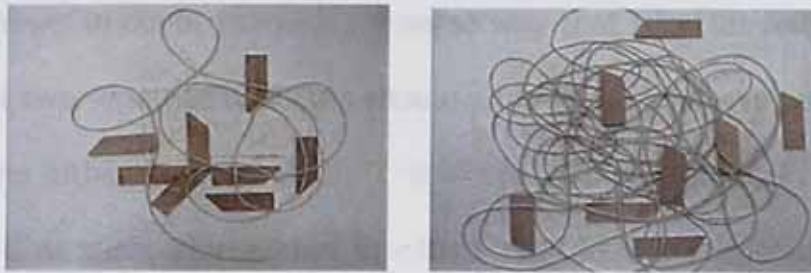
field and during exhibitions, seminars, and conferences all helped to foreground this research without losing the aims and objectives set out.

Most of the paintings capture a large number of iconographies found in all coastal Yoruba communities. These iconographies reflect coastal Yoruba art in abstract expressionism, that which is explicitly heuristic rather than dogmatic concept. These artworks have developed tremendously or evolved in new forms, forming (templates), or formats. The paintings done on wood panel surfaces evolved in a diverse range of sizes, which can be regarded as ideas or information art. All these have resulted in more conceptual discourses that allowed the exploration and co-existence of metaphysical and sociocultural notions of coastal Yoruba arts in new artistic vocabularies.

These vocabularies found in operation while working in the studio translate into '*wet on wet*', '*paint into painting*' and '*drape-tendencies*' or effects, these further helped in expounding studio actions as comparable to other world arts. The expressions and materials found in the paintings bear the marks of modernist ideas explored on both canvas and wood surfaces, in its entirety, the whole lot of the artworks painted with pallet-knife and brushes, in sand with infusion of rope have helped greatly in achieving a quality that communicates specific aspects of images or iconographies. Suffice to say that, data gathered from field research and studio practice reveal some beautiful creations in mixed media modes. The paintings also reveal dissimilar traits while their themes or compositions dispose the subjects to an essentially "synthetic-cubist" style which ultimately launches this research into a complex circle of two different approaches that can be described as '*transformation*', '*continuity and change*' thereby propelling new visual designs.

The two approaches and tendencies militate against creative stagnation and open new boundaries that challenge out-dated artistic concepts. Intuition,

observation, reflection and imagination formed the basis upon which these ideas foreground, and from this instance, a more practical exploration evolved. After all, a step into the "unknown" can propel creativity and new Yoruba art forms.



Plates 25/26: Abiodun Kafaru - *Untitled Mixed Media on Wood*

These images (Plates 25/26) draw on materiality to present or argue for or reflect what constitutes art and oral communication among Yoruba communities. The images reflect stages in experimental creativity and the development of a style in which the result reveals more intuitive interface for two-dimensional interaction with materials. The materials include mundane things such as rope, wood-scrap reflective of Western ideologies, while displaying concepts and interpretations that capture Yoruba histories such as their migration from Ile-Ife, Nigeria to the coastal region.

I use the constraints and affordances of materials and processes understood through a hands-on approach as inspiration, although I sought to demystify ideas that offer amazing possibilities, and that which demands innovativeness and aesthetic emotion. As a result I now create using found objects approached with virtual touch (haptic) reflecting iconographical patterns, a process that is more intuitive and less prescriptive than oral-art. This approach allows more straight forward explorations, through material interactions, to discuss and point-out wild concepts and ideas, and as quickly and roughly within required parameters and, as Alan Pipes argues (in Reiser, 2011) in *Drawing for*



*Designers*, to remain flexible and undecided for as long as possible frees an artist from the prior condition of completeness.

My reactions towards reflecting element of or aspect of contemporary vision, were never in doubt in much the same way that Nigerian and Yoruba artists recognise that two separate concepts should and may as well evolve as one or with one inside the other image. Here, I seek to explore coastal Yoruba terrain materially and as such, this action in effect limited the scope of what I found possible and available. However, this period presented us with the gesture, which ultimately bears the characteristics of art and design, a concept that is infinitely stimulating. This is often depicted in the works to arouse "aesthetic emotion". The images made in the studio express intuitions, innovative and draughtsmanship that probes while challenging rules and claims made on behalf of Yoruba arts perhaps. However, in an attempt to capture all this in one sense, an intriguing concept has consciously come through the ideas presented in the paintings in abstract form.

'Power' (Plate 64, p.213), a mixed media investigates status, power, signs, and symbols; it is a symbolic work portraying multiplication as a natural phenomenon. This picture captures innovative sensation, in one sense a new-expressed impulse I introduced lately while experimenting in the studio as against what obtained in the early stages of the project. At this point, I was pleased with the effect of creative manoeuvring emanating from this work, which depicts elements of culture in an abstract form that reflects Yoruba kinship and status symbols.

The motifs and signs used link Yoruba philosophy and social values to nature. These attributes are well composed systematically with found objects, collages such as newsprints, fabrics and used-cans. Both charcoal and pencil are helpful in outlining and capturing uniqueness and precision and are helpful in

creating quality rendition of the subject. The series of materials explored reflect or enhance sensation while helping to answer academic rubrics of 21st century ideas of originality and authorship to mention just a few. The spectacular is infused in the images and is interesting and guided by the metaphoric and symbolic use of visual elements and principles of design such as balance, colour harmony, and space to achieve communication that is subjective of chromatic hue. I have added tones of colours symbolically to accentuate the eerie feelings of ritual consummation. While combining these, I equally sought to create a pleasing design and reading without losing the message.

My statement and explanations reflect Yoruba drum poetry, decoded in signs and patterns rendered in planes of hue, using paper montage splinted into sections in abstract forms. Professionally, I choose theme, approach and subject specifically to challenge cubists' ideas used by contemporary Yoruba artists through exploring motifs. This of course points to the fact that the work is explicitly punctured, an idea I am more concerned with than describing or representing only, but in which ideas and materials are mainly employed as medium for expressing emotions.

The reactions made within (Plates 42 p.202; 43, p.203) explicitly present new concepts applied loosely. While the action expressed is intentional, the experiments opened up drastic shifts in the studio research. The quest for innovation was then to subject the mechanics of processes and procedures to rigorous literal analysis. In so doing, I deliberately rejected the idea of skill as championed by the formalists, whilst departing from this aspect of established tradition of modern craft theory. In this instance, my thought was to create a method of work and enquiry that are completely innovative. While reserving the workmanship tendencies, I was more concerned with breaking away from or

divorcing manual skill from mental skill (technical know-how), an action that sought to move against the grain of long established Arts and Craft Movement opinion (Reiser, 2011).

These images are executed in rectilinear or cruciform forming patterns that were crucial to solving problems, which I have actively had to contend with in this research. This idea came about through experimentation with materials and styles to communicate rhythm and movements. These images capture identical forms that are contained within motivations that are variously aesthetic, ecological, theatrical, and structured. A specific message was reflected through rope arrangement with stuck woodcuts arranged systematically and scattered across horizontal surfaces but could also potentially occupy a vertical space that enhances effective aesthetic zing. This action presents conception actualised through artistic methods of technical theory (precision) to represent Awori settlement and their migration from Ile-Ife.

#### **4:15 Studio Methodology, Techniques and Stages**

The first step was to spread tone of paint on the ground. I make use of Masonite board with thinned cerulean blue oil pigment, the surface was left to dry for two days. I was concerned with the distinction between workmanships resulting from experimentation and risk and the certainty of established process. The format was a purposeful reframing of the dichotomy between craft and industry, or hand and machine, while each of the paintings done in the same sizes had some advantages in terms of accuracy, mobility and flexibility.

I used experimentation and risk to determine the quality of the result, which was not predetermined, but depended on judgment, care and dexterity.

Starting from concept and decisions on surface and points of reflection on the theme, the piece ended in a painting with tones of chromatic hue with some of the under-painting hues showing through in areas of the surface where they created the effects of layering and palimpsest. I prefer a mid-toned canvas or wood and mid-range raw chromatic hues. Choice of colour schema in this practice led to neutral undertones that complement the many colours used in most of the mixed media paintings done in this section.

#### **4:16 Stage Two Introduction of Narratives**

Stage 2 involved working on narrative and interaction of spaces as basis to explore materials and object while exploring the complexities and shifting nature of Yoruba social lifestyles and urban environments. My aim was to work with patches of thick hues on surfaces to dislocate spaces, to create a narrative based on repetitive patterns in an attempt to create an image in which figurines interact with microorganism and nature to evoke rural folktale and festival or *Efe* in Yoruba language. The next step or line of action was to draw with my pallet knife after under-coat had been applied on ground or surface. At this stage, the main idea was still unformed and I explored with what would constitute collages and different types of forms that would ultimately lead to or constitute the composition.

The resulting image created an enabling avenue for me to express my idea of rhythm and to provide the direction for the subject in which the textural effect and paint became clearer. In a more lightly toned ground with hues of blues transparent pigments are thinly applied before the thick layer is laid in order to retain individual colour, which are characterised by dominant effects of warmth

rendered in lighter yellow and neutrals. The second stage was achieved with great care and the process of applying colour required me to wait for one hue to dry before applying other colours in order to create a composition that is interesting.

#### **4:17 Stage Three Infusion of Found Object**

After realising the desired concept (conceptual art) and form, I then set out to infuse or paste woodcuts and charcoal effect at the focal point to create a feeling of continuation of themes. I played with the idea of incongruous forms pushed into crowded space. Few areas received prominence at the same time and to the effect that the form and process enabled me to communicate through colours and objects (wood) applied at the indented area. Woodcuts of series of shapes formed in both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms were glued to the surface to construct a similar generative process, whereby interactions of many simple components could give rise to a complex, structurally sound composite form.

The rigid woodcuts (plywood) are specially cut, and pasted strategically with the intention of capturing a folktale (*Efe*) setting enhanced with motifs and patterns from histories and legends such as *Alo-apagbe*. At this point, the combination of compositional arrangements made it easier to infuse the painting with many identifiable meanings.

#### **4: 18 Stage Four Collection of Assemblage**

Here the concept has been developed with the image now consisting of a collection of approaches assembled in an accumulative but simple process that highlights the interactions of many components, parts and complex spatial

morphologies. While I arranged the wood components in circular and curvilinear form in order to contrast various forms, this activity started with the layering of pigment and drawings with well-defined iconographical images. Consequently, the details of the composition are defined through curvilinear shapes and figures, this is achieved by drawing the spaces between the solid forms and then adding to the symbols across the painting surface in a move designed to point out the constituent iconographic features.

I experienced challenges in this painting while representing the forms; I intentionally expressed hues defined through generative algorithmic process as the means of encoding non-linear instructions through a prism of rhythm whilst simultaneously creating signs on which viewers can generate their own meanings and readings of encoded messages. Tools used include brushes of small and medium sizes used to highlight and detail intricate areas in order to achieve a pleasing effect.

#### **4:19 Analyses of Paintings**

##### **Exposition One: Period of Experimentation and Exploration with Found Objects**

This period reflects on and covers my collections of various materials used as vehicle to execute the subjects of painting and drawings. These were the formative and experimental stages, I started with semi-abstract expressionism and through the peculiar arrangement of styles characterized by complex stylization and red hues. I aimed for and emphasized specificity in form, technique and colour rather than aim for mass-production of painting. Suffice to say that, I wanted to dialogue, to demystify theories, to delineate parameters of self-reference and materiality within a broader context of contemporary art.

The stage included limiting the sort of information to be given in the works, making them a study of how feelings and abstract ideas may be rendered effectively in the paintings. However, it was imperative to at least test out the relevance of how painting speaks and how painting can be theorized through a conceptual framework of materiality. In this section, I have selected paintings borne out of intuition and responsiveness to related lines of inquiry, which are based on keen observations of motifs and signs as a framework for creating a body of work in the studio. Most of the artworks are rendered through collages and improvisation. The works provoke “aesthetic emotions” and are filtered through representation with materials based on reflections and decisions on themes, all derived or drawn from Yoruba folklore, narratives and religious beliefs.

*Textile Fabric (Adire)* mixed media (Plate 33, p.197) unveils the strength of architectural technology among the Yoruba, and creates a stylistic rendition of the relatedness of arts and technology, which brings together the tension, and energies of communities. The motifs and patterns come from pillar-posts of *Obas'* palaces. These pillar-posts serve as unifying factors for the assemblage of Yoruba cultural heritage from ancient to modern periods. The style of the pillar-posts is reminiscent of ancient Yoruba plants decoration. In this painting, I have sought to capture the effects of Islamic and Brazilian invasions of Lagos, before and after colonization.

Far at the background are the distant entrances to the palace, the dominant red orange hue represented at the centre of the painting depicts boldness, excitement and the thickness of the reds chromatic helps achieve clarity, dominance and solidity witnessed in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba civilization and arts. The parallel groupings of patterns may suggest rhythmic sensation while the patterns, motifs and symbols created at the background with careful

representation of contours, design and lines symbolise the strength and powers of kings. The lighter opening at the middle of the work symbolises a good reign, a factor that in Yoruba culture is synonymous with old age.

Nwoko (1978) advises that all art works meant for decoration of the palace should embrace allegoric manifestation of coastal Yoruba migration, change, and transformation - the exploration of spaces of transit and transition using the object as a carrier of history and of memory. However, I have used the term, *Adire* patterns and techniques in the art object; this explains the distinctiveness of the patterns at entrance of palace gates in this painting. While regarding the depiction of human existence represented or reflected through arts forms Nwoko (1978) highlighted the great art and architecture as we have seen during the colonial times, arguing that good quality art and architecture are very stable, and remain visible and tangible because the emotions and feelings they portray are independent of time and place. However, art and culture articulate the transitory/fleeting moment that is the present by bringing together aspects of participation, collectiveness, and socio-political, historical and cultural issues under an umbrella such as coastal Yoruba culture. The freely spread out dots in the painting are arranged with the intention of replicating and commenting on the busy nature of the palace. They indicate people and the sensational feelings of the fabric design.

Towards the extreme edge of the painting, the dark colours are rough. These symbolise weaknesses and concerns in the powers of the kings. It means the destruction that is still taking place in the western region and among the cabinet of elected chiefs and Lagos State in coastal region and Nigeria as a whole. The painting has thus, critically abstracted the terrain of palace environment, revealing Yoruba traditional palace setting. Interestingly, the theme of this work



dwells more on social and environmental issues as well as on scientific developments using the process of batik (textile) technique in a painting like form, than on the cultural features.

Treasures (Plate 34, p.198) I have infused the rhythmical tendencies of balance of lines, wood, ropes, and paints glued on to canvas. This painting expresses a complete departure from discernible images and further extends the relationships of factors or principles of design, which is a reflection of and my interpretation of traditional Yoruba rhythmic design principles explored with the introduction of symbols, forms, curves and shapes. The assemblage introduced in the work is immensely useful or valuable to this painting and perhaps offers a considerable newness of forms and patterns or motifs in a new manner in which the old and new are linked in a continuum.

As Sausmarez (2002, p.17) submits, "The expression of colour, brightness and breadth in a particular painting is affected by its entire space of grounds." For instance, although the work (Plate 34, p.202) is an abstract, yet the patterns and colours reference aspects of Yoruba social life especially the movements and dynamism of music such as *Fuji* and *Apala*, notable examples of *high-life* and *Juju* music amongst the south west Yoruba of Nigeria. Sausmarez in his argument discusses the functions, and the usefulness of representation and how an understanding of various curves, which may exist in the form of rectilinear relatedness, may help to define the directional framework of the factors responsible for the painting. In this picture, I intentionally created and explored the sensational feeling for, and of fabric effects.

Thus, the forms in the work are not so much detailed but re-invented structure of collages. The newness achieved in this imagery reflects a new approach rendered in pure abstraction. The background is slightly idealized, it is

well knitted on the ground with glue while the found objects help to define and represent the image. The manipulation of cool colours, warm vibrant colours and woodcuts within the mobile are lines of patterns with clear links to Yoruba art (*Ona*) tradition. The paper collage stuck on the surface of the support reflects the face of modernity and western influence.

Suffice to state that the tendencies exhibited in the picture or mixed media are influenced by various contacts with European training. The tension operating in the painting visualises the force of gravity, the ropes and symbols are based on the Yoruba concept of seeing beyond the physical and denote the 'eye of the lion'. The use of motifs and patterns within the structure of the painting can be linked to Sausmarez (2002) visual dynamics. According to Sausmarez, the field of visual dynamics includes optical illusion, a very conspicuous element in contemporary art.

Fortune (Plate 35, p.198) is a mixed media painting that investigates and represents the issues concerning symbols of religious or spiritual power among the Yoruba. The painting is experimental and seems to have marked the departure of discernible images from my painting and the beginning of a new phase in which more attention is given to motifs, patterns and symbols. At the extreme edge of the picture, the low-relief effect, dots and dashes represents powers. Symbolically the spiritual life circle of the diviner is encoded in the painting in zoomorphic like-forms employed systematically and directly.

The imposing breaks of rope and planes in chromatic hue reinforced the birth of new trends in this research in which I sought to adapt rope, colour and sand in the creation of people running the affairs of State in relief sculpture. My aim in the painting is to adapt coastal Yoruba art forms and ideas beyond mere embellishment. The approach and result are innovative in the fact that different

symbols (iconographies) called *aami*, that are used as means of communicating among the Yoruba people, have now been intensified into a symbolic language used to tell and narrate messages like the old *Aroko*.

Stylistically ropes are arranged in a draft form, each one depict different forms with recessed plain of hues and relief features, which signify 'future-telling' and bright or good destiny. Suffice to say that the art of divination practice is quite varied among the ethnic groups of Nigeria. In Yoruba culture, the wheel of fortune comprises series of symbols that signify authority, human existence and power of the divination priest. Fortune wheel is a philosophical concept exemplified in the Yoruba adage: *O ju eni ma la ari yonu*. This literally means, "Whosoever will succeed will not get it on a platter of ease." (Adeyemi, 2011, p. 13). The brighter hue stands for good future/fortune while the darker colours connote challenging periods representing difficulties such as lack, stress, hunger, and trouble. Symbolically, the rope reflects different periods in the circle of life and this rhetorical comment is layered in cubist features placed in abstract form.

The different lines, patterns and symbols are systematically arranged to create outlines, demarcations, textures, forms and effects of different hues within and outside of the composition; the background speaks a coded language intentionally made to look dark to enable an assemblage of zoomorphic forms. The creation of the painting is predicated on the Yoruba belief system of *Ayanmo* (destiny) and as Adeyemi (2008) asserts, *Ayanmo* is a cultural philosophy and world-view that posits the predestination of man no matter the circumstances. This philosophy remains valid among Yoruba royalty. In traditional Yoruba society, people believe in re-incarnation or life after death, this belief is represented in art in circles and kingship institution. The lighter hues are creatively harmonised to

reveal the majesty of royalty and the indeterminacy of fate, this is expressed with sand and colour in an assemblage to evoke the spirit of authority.

Traditional Old Woven (Plate 36, p.199) I investigate the potency of traditional woven *aso-oke* among Yoruba people and at the same time explore the utilization of old clothing patterns and other paraphernalia as markers of identity and as objects of worship of deities among hunters and cults. The patterns and motifs are found in fabrics such as *adire-eleko*, *aso-oke* and woven materials with fibres. In principle, the painting combines the motifs of other riverine iconographies and water-spirits patterns, signs, rhythm and movements with textile forms shaped into a more acceptable art medium exemplifying “art for art sake”, in an attempt to further enlarge the scope of Yoruba designs. In this work, there is a lighter display of low relief forms stitched together in a background transformation rendered in the old *aso-oke* patterns called *alaari*. Hue is very crucial or immensely paramount in this image, which is a neo-traditional construction and therefore considered as a major player in the component of works produced by this research.

The arrangements in this painting are characterized by energetic and robust transformation of forms derived from Yoruba woodcarving tradition, the latter is an extension of the elegant adaptation of forms with lesser ornamentation found in recent paintings by artists around Lagos State, Nigeria. In the painting ropes and sawdust are stuck with glue, while the paints resonate with levels of relationships the off-cuts wood captures human form (hunters) in profile format. The fabric elements that make up work is more aerial than earthly and more like the mystical “flying-carpet” represented on the canvas. Other features that comment on human spirituality and status consist of familiar items such as peacock, duck, ostrich, snake, sword and images representing human figure.

Enclosing these items is a thick wall of patterns preventing unwanted non-members, the unpredicted viewers. The sawdust modelled in a low relief form helps to create a sculptural-like design structure in which even the zoomorphic forms within the enclosure do not penetrate the patterned wall. These dynamic forces operate in other units of the components. The human forms bear the patterns and motifs of hunting and hunters' guilds. The design structure widens the terrain of textile beyond its conventional approach or formal use. In the words of Filani (1997) traditional old woven painting "serves as an eye opener in areas of continuity and change and perhaps its contextual usage through the prism of multivalent motifs and forms" (Filani, 2005, p.17) is designed to reiterate as well as inform viewers of a specific cultural iconography. This mode of communication can be used to reinforce the state of affairs but it also highlights the potentials in challenging such cultural status.

Unequal Talents (Plate 37, p.199) 'hands are not equal' the hands in deep hues reflect a Yoruba saying which literarily means or denotes unequal talents. The depiction re-enacts the traditional belief system and Yoruba old saying *Atelewo-eni kin-ton-enije* literary meaning; 'your hands can never deceive you but the future depends on your actions'. This saying and painting direct attention to the present generation and "old" values, like the palm in red hue that look more to the outside world for inspiration rather than looking inward.

The socio-cultural implication of the painting almost reads like a warning, 'the present generation has forgotten that every rag has had its own glory day'. The palms are styled to reflect individualism and collectivism simultaneously but the unity achieved is also reflected in the uniformity of organic forms, of hues, shades and patterns. Depending on the focus and emphasis, the palms signify good season, the future or destiny. The tone of lighter chromatic effects is intentional

with the aim of revealing how the visible line denoting linear value has its psychological effects on its interpretation of the physical world, coordinated to form a rhythm. I have used charcoal media to create and to add visual texture to the procaine blue harmony that pervades the whole space of the picture.

*Dundun* (Plate 38, p.200) stands out in terms of composition; it is made up of lines and planes with different layers. On the main canvas are drums of various sizes made of different shapes and in a special arrangement designed to accommodate various talking drums used in most public social and ritual ceremonies. The painting emphasises the roles of drums, drummers and drumming in Yoruba culture. Drumming is an essential feature in the public performances of traditional and political leaders and can be used to praise, satirise, ridicule and correct individuals and people in public office and for various ceremonies. They play a part in daily activities in palaces, such as appeasing and eulogising an Oba in the morning and during important celebrations. The painting emphasises the importance of *Dundun* talking drum and poetry stylized in a manner to accommodate the basic forms of other associated drums, while visual unity, coherence and intensity are captured.

According to Ajayi (1974) cited in Ajetunmobi, (2003, p.37):

*The main functions of the drummers at war are to establish excitement and motivation in the fighting soldiers and thus encourage them to defeat their opponents. In doing this, the drummers or flute players shower praises on the war-chief or leader. The praise might include the leader's personal oriki-praise names or that of his lineage and ancestors to make the praised feel proud more gallantly.*

The middle of the painting consists of various sets of drums, which comprise sets of mother drums called *Saworo* the other being its complement. This right part of the painting is dominated by *Apinti* (drum) set used by hunters, which include *Iya-Ilu* and *Omole* smaller drum. The centre also includes human figures in

a stylistic form. The patterns, designs and motifs are for aesthetic value while the foreground is arranged to accentuate the rhythm and dynamism of daily activities in the painting.

*Egungun (Alarinjo)* (Plate 39, p.200) is a mixed media painting on *Egungun*, a performance that is specially empowered to evoke the spirit of the dead and ancestors. The picture symbolises the worship and appeasement of the goddess and spirit of the sea. It is part of a multimedia performance of several components consisting of costuming, dance and music and a participating audience. The lavish use of grades of yellow in the piece links mother earth, *Egungun* with patterns, (*ami*) mark, which the masquerades are, said to display in performance. This mat-like effect of *aso-oke* is intentional and is influenced by the various patterns of hue chromatic as in the *pakiti* mats woven by *Ijesha* women. Improvisations on materials and process ranging from wood to organic forms represent the form as an inheritance passed onto new generations. The motifs are well loaded to reflect the community masquerade that has the highest ranking among the Yoruba people. This is the *Egungun* or *alare* (entertainers), a masquerade that is free to display at any time of the year and during festivals. The *alare* masquerade is spiritual and often performs at the front of the Obas' palaces.

*Royal Instinct* (Plate 40, p.201) is a traditional symbol denoting the visual authority of an *Oba*, and it depicts the strength and powers, status and authority vested in Yoruba Kingship institutions. The painting combines discernible human and abstracted images and highlights some elements of semi-naturalism form with patterns. It has the symbols and designs associated with relics of the *Oba's* Staff of Office. The head in mask-like form is the head of the *Oba* of Lagos but at the extreme left side of the painting, are another figurine and the representative of the *Oba* who as permitted by custom, may assume the status of a leader in the

Oba's absence. In traditional Yoruba, the *Oba* (king) is referred to as *alase* (the one that wields authority) (Adeyemi, 2008), this power and authority permeate the painting.

The painting emphasises the high rank of the *Oba* (king) as the highest in ranking among the royal chiefs. The colour selection lies within the purview of harmonious hue to create a feeling of traditional African art. The purpose of highlighting the essentially African characteristics in the picture is specifically to capture the effect of an Oba's authority in the palace. The mask symbolises the head of the king on his staff of office, the drummer with a talking drum is to show the significance of the voice of the king on all matters. Consequently, the performance achieved in the picture expresses night activities as in the *Efe* ceremony of the Awori people. The drummer/drum informs the community of the arrival of the *Oba* while the voice of the drums denote praises in cultic chants and praises that highlight what the king stands for in like Lagos State. The Yoruba are well known for their use of ornamentation and sculptural expressions, which are generally decorative, and in geometrical shapes. The king sometimes sends his staff of office as a representation of his prominence and presence in an event or occasion. The hues in this painting express ideas, beliefs and myths, which determine the cultural, social and religious practices of a community. The painting also shows the presence of supernatural forms within the overall communal worldview represented by motifs of wild and domestic animals.

Other paintings produced in the course of this research are '*Ojuawo*' (Plate 41, p. 202), a flat relief painting that reveals the sculptural features of my work. The images reflect divination and ritual practice and symbolise the spiritual eye of diviners. The composition is a mixed media work, using fabrics of different irregular geometric patterns, with reflection of chromatic hues. Woodcuts of



different shapes and sizes are used to reflect the morphological components and status of the divination art and the traditional powers portrayed by spiritualists and herbalists.

The painting is inspired by motifs of diverse organic and geometric shapes with their peculiar irregular symmetry that is typical of the African perception of design and order, both features used by Yoruba people to show the spiritual powers of the *Oba* and some high-ranking chiefs in the society. The star motif connotes the good fortune and secure future of the community, and the rope denotes the eye of diviners who are empowered to see the future and what the community will experience.

*Opo* (Pillar-Post or House Post) (Plate 41, p.202) is a freestanding sculpture expressed in two-dimensional spaces in mixed media. The imagery conjures signs, symbols and effects from the rich repertoire of high-class elites. The decorative elements are very rich in formal qualities and captivating in their thematic clarity. These practices are noticeable in different parts of Africa and date back to many centuries. The painting is symbolic, expressing Yoruba spirit of the dead. It is exemplified in woodcarving and comments on the beauty and creative depth inherent in Yoruba traditional art forms.

#### **4:20 Expositions Two: Period of Duality and Exploration of Materials**

At this stage, the artworks reflect work on dual representation of forms. Works produced in this section reveal tendencies which cut across academic discussions, training background, techniques, and use of collages and materials. They are the portrayals of individual visions and ideas, their themes mostly deriving from Yoruba motifs of various backgrounds such as from folklore, folktales

and religious rituals. These artworks are close to each other in the process and materials used, in the approach to colour scheme and colours used and so share some common features. For instance, elongation and naturalistic proportions are noticeable in the painting of this period. The compositions display element of *avant-garde* knited well on the painting surfaces, which point to new interpretations, deconstructions, individual authorship and originality of the research.

'Costume' (Plate 42, p.202) is a depiction of *Egungun* masquerade practice in Yoruba culture and communities; it is unique and colourfully decorated with series of iconographical forms such as cowries, snail-shells, human-skulls or animal-skulls. The painting explores the complex and concentric movements of *Egungun* masquerades in a given space. While celebrating important festivals masquerades come in different forms, majority are colourfully decorated with different embellishments, motifs and patterns that convey powers and intricate costumes that highlight the strength and power of each masquerade and the status of the royal household that backs it. The colour ensemble in one sense of art is conspicuously captured in this painting and created with pallet knife. The colourful, lyrical composition of *Egungun* costume is symbolic and similar to *Alare* costume.

*Agbada-nla* (Plate 44, p.203) is a reflection of traditional Yoruba fabric design and depicts the forms of apparel worn by the wealthy and affluent among the coastal Yoruba. The design style specifically embodies the old saying; 'the ways you dress depict who you are'. *Agbada-nla* has been playing a leading role among all other clothing apparels of the Yoruba and the trend of fashion has survived for many years with its rich and classy embroidery.

*Ijala* (Plate 45, p.204) is a mixed media painting that evokes the spirit of hunting and songs among the guilds of hunters. *Ijala* is a Yoruba oral poetry consisting of chants and songs composed and used by hunters. In the image sand, ropes, wood and oil paints are arranged to show the profile of the guilds in a colourful hue in low relief format. The hues chromatic describe what humans make, as against what nature proffers. The inner miniature painting placed strategically at the middle of the picture represents fire set by the guilds and the spiritual powers of hunters.

*Egungun Alarape* masquerade (Plate 46, p.204) it is inspired by patterns of Yoruba family traditions. *Egun Alarape* is associated with zigzag, circle, and round patterns, and typifies the cult art among the Awori of coastal Yoruba. It is the most colourful and powerful of all the masquerades. This masquerade is the spiritual representation of ancestral spirits, goddesses and gods. Its patterns, forms, motifs and symbols convey its ritual significance. It also functions as the creative expressions of the belief and philosophies of the Yoruba. The Oba's crown represented at the top hand corner of the picture denotes the strength of the masquerade; the signs are sometimes adopted in a written language.

Untitled (Plate 47, p.205) is a simplification of forms. The imagery is inspired by the river-based spiritual pot of the coastal Yoruba. The rope at the centre expresses the domain of the river deity while the wood is a simplified representation of the spirit goddess behind the pot. The wood at the side of the pot represents villages and towns around the riverine areas. The work is in pure abstraction with the intention to depict the ritual tendencies and powers associated with the pot.

Folktales Alo-apagbe (Plate 48, p.205) explores Yoruba oral literature, which includes genres such as prose, poetry, and drama (Akeusola, 2003). The

picture expresses evening and moonlight traditional folktales activities among the Yoruba people, and helps to record or document village pattern and structures of storytelling among the elders. Thus, it is specially made to situate the theatrical display in two-dimensional forms. According to Akeusola, (2003,p.132) “the African story tellers had their novel form in the folktales and *Alo-apagbe* (in Yoruba)”, the theatrical form known as drama, an aspect of our culture in Africa, could be seen in *Egun Alare*, *Isipa-Ode*, and some other African traditional displays” (Akeusola, 2003, p.133).

Divination tray (Plate 49, p.206) captures Yoruba traditional belief system. The painting is in the round and is a symbolic representation of Yoruba cultural space. This stylistics created within the background edge of the image enclosure talks of transience and of the transitory, one could say the candid sustenance of the tradition never far removed. Yet one could argue that although the whole ambience is that of a monologue, it is an existential dialogue of memories, the simulation of a reality that is probably no longer lived, or ever experienced. The nature and activities happening within the work speak the language of artistic recreation. The white hue at the centre of the painting is to give a feeling of harmony and brighter future, and the designs at the extreme edges are reflective of weaving art found among the Awori.

The use of colour in the image - is suggestive of avant-garde while the stream expresses various seasons and transitory periods in human life. Beauty to the Yoruba symbolise decency and purity. The designs and motifs are fused to portray feelings of traditional music an integral part of human life and Yoruba tradition. To the Yoruba, music serves as a means of communication and a recollection of history. As stated in Okunade (2003), through traditional music oral tradition, migration and settlement are better recalled and articulated.

Beauty (Plate 50, p.206) is a painting that reflects on coastal Yoruba music. Theoretically and practically music and images are inseparable and are linked to traditional Yoruba mythology, and function as interdependent on each other or in the manner of "Siamese twin" as (Okunade, 2003) has described them.

'Fragment of Tradition' I, II (Plate 51, p. 207) is a painting that captures Yoruba old saying, (*Ko-si-gberumi lafin-Oba*) that literarily translates to 'one can only be allowed to drop what one brings to the palace; one cannot take anything out of the palace.' The stick-like forms depict human anatomy, people and valuables brought to the King (*Oba*). Broadly speaking, the painting speaks of palace life and the power *Obas* have over their communities, presented in a vivid language. The pots on the head of the women are seasonal gifts intended in the palace for the king or *Oba*. The colour placement and the juxtaposition of patterns and designs with harmonious hue attest to the consciousness of design orientation in Yoruba traditional artists.

#### **4:30 Expositions Three: Definition of Forms**

This section expresses styles, themes, and styles including oral narratives inherent in Yoruba iconography. The compositions reveal Yoruba art tradition with an emphasis on histories, legends, rhythms and linear movement most common in Yoruba art. A good many of Yoruba designs or patterns can be located within the palace, they are mainly expressed in pencils and charcoal medium. Materials used range from pastel, coloured pencil, sketchpads, and watercolour while some of the images reveal sensations characteristic of Western art.

Fragment of Tradition (Plate 52, p. 207) this is an aspect of Yoruba creative art and designs based on reading and recitation on the verses of the Holy - Quran;

the Islamic code of holiness, purity and trust. Islamic teaching, the *Walaah*, inspires this imagery. *Walaah* is often used by Muslim scholars and among Yoruba believers who embrace Arabic ways of life. The painting also explores the coastal terrain of Lagos State, showing the busy nature of Lagos streets, city and its environs. The yellow hue and white colour at the centre of the painting symbolise the spirituality entailed in Arabic and Islamic studies. The blue colour effect serves as the natural coastal surroundings. The lower side of the picture is encoded with messages such as peace. The impression in deep tone reflects crowds and large sections of population seen in recent times.

Embroidery (Plate 53, p. 208) this is another Yoruba traditional *adire* (fabric work). The patterns and motifs at the top region in the work reflect the natural effects of fibres and the sophistication in simplicity is deliberate without any form of untoward complex expression. The darker tone expressed at the centre of the work depicts entrance to a palace, effects of Islamic conquest in northern West Africa and the cultural invasions witnessed in Lagos in the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially in notable places around the palace. The work reveals the different textures of traditional patterns with depth that creates relief forms of tone and shapes. The interwoven patterns and tones provide pleasure and comfort to the eyes.

*Oba's Palace Decoration* (Plate 54, p. 208) expresses old tradition of *Aso-Ofi* textile design on two-dimensional surfaces. The designs are encapsulated in semi-abstract with pencil - to express a form that pre-dates the introduction of Islam in Lagos colony, this is depicted in the form of fabric worn by royalty among the Yoruba. The middle part of the work is loaded in a stick-like form, showing or representing the *Oba* in profile with a procession of high chiefs behind him. The design component in the form of a star symbolises the majesty of the king. The star expressed at the middle of the work denotes periodic events and the high

status of the king within his community. At the topmost part of the picture are towns and villages, but depicted in abstract formats and form. The wall decoration of the palace is busy; it equally evokes some spirituality associated with royalty. The centre view of the four angles of the picture is a design in stick form, which symbolises the king's staff of office. The lines, circles, and tones effects in the work depict human forms.

Centre of Excellence (Plate 55, p.209) is a clear statement in visual form about the coastal Yoruba—the state surrounded by water and people. *Ori* (head) the head depicted prominently in the image is the most vital and the seat of power of any country. *Ori*, according to the Yoruba cosmology or belief system, symbolises both the physical head as well as the spiritual head (destiny). This is expressed with pencil in a monochrome in semi-abstract form. The painting depicts the mass movement of people, the busy terrain and why the State is dubbed '*centre of excellence*'.

*Opanbata* (Plate 56, p.209) is a flat decorative painting that explores and documents the staff of office among *Eyo* masquerade. This craft practice is very common among the Lagos colony called (Islanders). The incisions on the staff are signs of powers wielded by masquerades and designed to ward off evils. The incision inscribed on the staff in blue chromatic is also used to signify the court to which each *Eyo* belongs.

Masks (Plate 57, p.210) are traditionally used to shield human facial appearance and the identity of the wearer. They evoke spirits and deities among the coastal Yoruba and other peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria, especially the Igbo people. The rendition in this picture, expresses Yoruba artistic tendencies characterized by royalty and kingship. The beads symbolise powers, potency and royalty. The painting depicts high-level rank among the league of *Obas* (kings).The

work consists of a carved mask to explore the importance and functions of the head. The work is predominantly in red, blue and yellow hue. It is similar to the work found on *Mbari* sculptures of South-Eastern Nigeria.

The symbols, lines, motifs and textures are at the base and other parts of the work. The green background helps to project the colour and message inscribed in the painting. Beads are depicted and shown as the paraphernalia of office, and sometimes as an emblem of beauty. African masking tradition is brought into focus in this painting. This beadwork is rendered in such a manner to reveal my exploration of red hues on the effects of light and shade.

Ancestral work (Plate 58, p.210) is the most glamorous means through which the rest of the world can view the Yoruba and many other African art works. The talking drums (*Iya-Ilu*) depicts the affluence and popularity of high class *Obas*, and this in effect reveals reality, powers and spirituality. At the centre of the painting, is a crown expressing the powers of some royal masquerades in Yoruba tradition? The two sides of the artwork highlight different classes of chiefs and their functions. Thus, the expression in the background depicts other high chiefs in the background; the drummer and the *Iya Ilu* (the mother drum) are united in their world of rhythm as expressed in this work.

Untitled Assemblage (Plate 59, p.211) this painting is a stylistic form portraying a sacrificial performance in which the colour used is abstracted and supported with inscriptions of patterns, signs and symbolism. This is a simple representation of the ritualistic nature of sacrifice for cleansing. Usually a reigning *Oba* sometimes uses such sacrifices to appease his dead ancestors for the success of his own tenure. Failure to do this may mean a lot of problems for a community.

*Egungun* (Masquerade) (Plate 60, p.211) pastel on paper is a flat decorative painting that investigates the symbolic nature of costumes and



performance of masquerades among the coastal Yoruba. The elaborate costume design as typified by *Egungun* or *Egun* masquerades tradition among the coastal Yoruba is a colourful art practice. The white colour impression at the centre of the costume is an *awon* (face-net) *awon* as face costume. This helps to create a small opening where the masquerade can both breathe and see. That is why the Yoruba say in one of their numerous proverbs: *Egungun moni eniyan Ko mo on* (you cannot see *Egungun* himself). In the same vein, the spirit beings are believed to see the living from behind their realms, but the living only see them when they manifest on earth as *Egungun*.

Looking at the array of the cloth, one could see a high level of display of visual beauty, of variety and ingenious creativity. The continuous repetitions of circles at the edges and within the painting denote an unbroken covenant with the *Egungun* cult, so that the spirituality of the masquerade and masking secrets are specially kept solely in the family. The radiating rainbow colours are highly symbolic as Adebowale (2012) pointed out in a personal communication, stating that the *Egungun* costume is highly decorated to show how powerful it is. The number of cowries in the costume connote the years of performance and powers associated with the masquerade. The triangular and pyramid patterns in tones of red, blue and green are for aesthetic effect. The pastel drawing is abstracted and is based on a traditional *Egungun* costume characterised by angularity and planarity.

The delicate lines give the picture a definite geometrical shape and dynamic patterns, which are reminiscent of Yoruba motifs. The representation of this picture with glowing intense colour recalls the majesty of the masquerade. On the issue of costume, Awolalu (1979) stressed that *Egungun* (masquerade) is essentially and apparel attired in *ago*, a special dress or outfit made from cloths of various

colours sewn together in such a way that it covers the wearer from head to feet. It means that the *Egungun* costume helps to veil the identity of the performer from the glare of the public.

Palace Art, (Plate 61, p.212) is a work of lines, linear design, decorations and patterns explored to interrogate various subject matters. It is a symbol of both traditional and political authority. This imagery is contemporary in style and hints at my own development of the feel and taste for *Avant-garde* rendition. The imagery is coded with Yoruba symbols of *aami* (mark), used as means of communication among the Yoruba people of Lagos State. This is intensified into a symbolic language.

As rightly observed by Adebowale (2012), the design structure and embellishment of patterns are symbolic of the strength, powers and recognition of the royal fathers among the Yoruba people as a mandate of kinship among the coastal Yoruba. In traditional political cosmology, the king is the representative of God on earth (*Oba alaiyeluwa, Igbakeji Orisa*). The drawing, in planes with different lines and patterns, represents sacred effects. The centre is busy with human form; the lines are well knitted such that the message is well composed, showing the busy nature of the *Oba's* palace. In his study, Adebowale highlights the light use of signs, symbols and motifs as a way of communication among the Yoruba. He further stresses that the strength inherent in the paintings of most Yoruba artists is that they have an intellectual approach to creativity, which I have referred to. The motifs at the top of the work are inspired by Yoruba crafts decorations, embellishment such as calabash carving and pottery decorations. The inscribed lines at the centre of the imagery are reminiscent of the use of lines in Ofili's (Reads,1994) paintings and drawings. They improve the relationship

between the background and the other elements of the work such as forms and motifs.

High-Chief (Plate 62, p.212) a charcoal pencil on paper drawing reveals a seated figure in stylised form, depicting a high chief executed in a monochromatic style with the dominant scheme of black and white figures symmetrically arranged. It is a composition that knits seating arrangements, space, structure, order, symbols, and patterns into a well-laid out subtle effect. The seating is conspicuously Yoruba tradition, with the High-Chief (*Baale*) at the centre on the high seat. The background defines the nature of the palace with the snake in the background reflecting and the power of the *Baale*. The rich repertoire of Yoruba images and the use of geometric and organic motifs in this work attest to this artist's affinity with indigenous forms and motifs.

Cult Art (Plate 63, p.213) this painting helps in revealing some cultic activities and spiritual tendencies associated with Yoruba secret society and interpretations of ritual events happenings in and around the *Ogboni-awo art*. The painting began with a white canvas and smooth surfaces, followed by the introduction of rope lined with glue to ensure some form, rhythm and readability at the same time. This painting is among a series of attempts in my overarching innovation and experimentation with composition and geometric patterns, ropes, wood, paints, found objects and texture could be transformed on canvas surfaces whilst communicating a sense of ritual rhythms. This painting in clear term reveals a continuing interest by Yoruba artists, on motifs and patterns behind *Ogboni* secret society and cult members. Because the Yoruba do not reveal cult and shrines activities to non-initiates, the painting is abstracted and its secrets concealed from non-initiated viewers.

Head Destiny (Plate 64, p.213) among Yoruba and many African societies symbolise power, destiny and the site of authority. Many African mask-carving traditions evoke the spirit of human creation and existence. Here, the head is slightly stylised, shaded with darker line tones and shadowy impressions in the background. The neck region of the work is decorated with beads and fabric rosary to connote the spirituality of the mask involved in the work. Traditionally, the masking tradition among the Yoruba cuts across all masquerades associated with water deity and family traditions and ancestor worship.

The darker tone is applied in the picture to add weight and form. The shape of the mouth drawn in an open format is specific to allow breathing for the wearer. The eye region faces down to show the effects of ritual and not cause fear for the public, perhaps to show deception. This imagery depicts a beautifully carved mask, which is usually the centre of attraction at most festivals. The upper region of the work is an emblem of ritualistic tendencies with the synthesis of symbols, lines, motifs and textures at the base of the mask and at the lower region of the painting. All the impressions in the work help further strengthen the pictorial surface.

Pattern of Culture (Plate 65, p.214) the drawing is of royalty in a stylistic form showing the dress pattern of high-class elites among the core royal family and the Yoruba living within coastal land. The expressive lines, patterns and motifs depicted in the work represent a tradition and inscriptions regarding wealth and periods of affluence among the chiefs or notable persons. The designs used are *adire* patterns. The line waves at the top part of the work denote generation links from one to the other.

The Fortune Wheels (Plate 66, p.214) are different in structure, form and colour composition, they bear affinity with one another in terms of content. They

are symbols of communication through the oracle. Divination is the art of receiving hidden knowledge or insight from supernatural sources. In the Yoruba tradition, diviners use different instruments in consulting the oracle, two of which are *Opele* with *Opon-ifa* and *Ile-ti-te*. The paintings speak the language and voice of *Ifa*, the oracle. In *Fortune II*, another picture of *Opon* (Divination tray) and *Opele* (its seeds) or *Orun mo eniti-o-mala* (heavens knows who will make it in life), patterns reflected in the background symbolize wealth. The centre of the picture, expressed in bright colours, conveys the idea that good time will definitely come in future.

The picture is built up of a series of shapes, squares and triangles so that each of them can work alone, make a pleasing design and affect communication at the same time. Lines also play a role in making links between the different shapes and colours. Inspired by the Yoruba traditional divination round sculpture, the ritual aesthetic value is not missed out. The choice of colours is inspired by the pastel work of Rothko. The juxtaposition of brown on other colours helps to break the monotony of cool hues. Red in this picture represents traditional divination beads. The yellow at the centre of the picture is a response to post-modernism that brings the viewer closer to the work without losing the appeal of the imagery.

Critical work since Shannon Fitzgerald (1982) has identified and investigated an aesthetic of painting thereby creating a medium theory. The medium being defined is visual art the current predominant form that representation (artwork) takes. Fitzgerald provides one of the rationalizations on which the denial of coastal Yoruba (African) modernity is premised.

These images of modernity in Yoruba art evolved through three distinct phases; the reduction of ancient or traditional forms of representation and the

emergence of other forms of painting. The second stage is diversifying in potential stature, a stage in which I worked with fabric, wood and newsprints and the third stage that focussed on the nature of coastal Yoruba ambient images. The hope was that at that point, perhaps the nature of the aesthetics of the artwork would become rather clearer than it has been in the past.

From these three periods, one can see a clear distinction between how innovativeness is employed in the interpretation of old coastal Yoruba art to new artworks, and the new approaches in the re-creation of the accompanying body of work. While working in the studio, I have looked at specific contexts in which modernism as a concept impacts upon and is used in coastal Yoruba art as a temporal definition in cultural production. An examination of the fictional constructs that have applied to coastal Yoruba and Africa has revealed the faulty expectation placed by non-African commentators on African artists and on the art, they produce. That their work shares characteristics understood as Western is neither a betrayal of their African contexts nor a privileging of Western influences. Rather the presence of western modernist influences aptly suggests a reciprocal exchange of ideas and merging of strategies, where the either/dichotomy dissolves. Most of the materials used are good and suitable, durable and free from insect damage. Pigment used varies from oil to water base; its fine glossy effects are good and cheaper. Fabric is attractive because of its design structure. Wood, sand and other found objects, such as newsprints equally serve as vehicles used in the art production based upon their peculiarity and advantages to achieve meaning and coherence.

Most of the works explored so far respond in different ways and continue on common themes in coastal Yoruba communities. The concept reveals element of a construct of simple components that grow to complex, structurally sound

composite forms. In addition to the drawing, mixed media manipulation and found object are used to create exquisite objects (artworks), the innovative sensation achieved allows for the potential reworking of particular paintings in a number of ways. The 'cut and paste', 'delete', and 'copy' allow for the movement, sorting and ordering of information captured in novel form within a file.

On a conceptual level, these 'actions' articulate the inherent core capabilities of media content realignment, morphology and multiplicity of form. Utilising the capabilities of digital system based options is a fundamental part of the digital creative process. The arrangement and manipulation of ideas and subject matter in a particular file format forms a cohesive model that is stable and well defined, these decision-making processes provide free-form reading templates that are coded in *ammin//lla* (mark). The outcome is artefact/artwork that creates a kind of digital/material spectrum that has some of the spatial-temporal qualities of a physical artefact. Theoretically, one may compare the creation and manipulation of digital files to the fundamental choices that an artist working with physical materials goes through. Sometime, decisions made about creating artwork or forming materials, surfaces or finishes, presentation considerations, and storage or preservation process have their distinctiveness parallel in the digital realm. Greenberg (1982) notes the importance of identifying these 'making structures' in the validation of distinctive art practices, the understanding of which helps establish the associated competences and unique nuances of a particular medium (Greenberg, 1982, p.5).

### 5:01 Analysis of Coastal Yoruba Tradition: Experimenting with Subjects, Styles, Process and Forms.

#### *Working with Ijala as Subject and Form*

This work covers the time and period I spent practising and experimenting on different materials and styles. At Stage 1, I was more conscious of the Yoruba traditional iconography, how these could be adapted or adopted in contemporary paintings and drawings, and the kinds of support best appropriate for my subject. The named factors are often dependent upon themes, materials and composition. Of all the surfaces I used in this stage while working in the studio component of the research, wood surfaces seemed professionally suitable, strong and convenient for mixed media work.

In Stage 1, which shows the beginning of work on the surfaces and experimenting with my own creative ideas and with what I have learned, I considered the arrangement and format of each composition, process and how particular paintings would evolve from the combination of process, material and style. The main materials were sawdust and woven fabrics which are depicted mainly in *Ijala*-derived and oriented paintings and drawings that I articulate in this Chapter and section of the thesis.

Desiring a loose union of processes, styles and materials, my work was based on 20<sup>th</sup> century mode of expressions when many artists sought to radicalise their work and utilised conventional and innovative media. Firstly, I sought to adopt 'Neo-Platonic' philosophy of the mathematician (Jack Burnham, 1970) and secondly, to employ the receptive taste of architectural concepts in order to introduce contraries to help me shape my thoughts regarding the subject matter



and form of the paintings within this research. In addition to my interest in contrasting linear colour constructs and creamy yellow, there was need to situate each composition thematically as well as structuring the resulting forms into a readable picture plane. In the process, I evoked a homogenous fabricated world that is not very easy to achieve and which may lead to expressive pieces that may be beautiful yet are more intimately related to basic element of art.

One of my intentions was to communicate and to capture in the body of paintings, *Ijala* hunters displays and activities, subjects and activities related to Yoruba royalty and social ceremonies, myths and legends surrounding the migrations of coastal Yoruba from the hinterland to the coast of Lagos State. These subjects are captured in the broad subject of *Ijala*, and are all reliant on Yoruba language and proverbs. Another consideration regarded the variables in texture based upon what I found necessary, and their relevance in terms of how these may be deployed to explore actions that may generate ideas and produce desired aesthetics feelings and effects. At a level the forms of painting and choice of materials were beginning to take shape, for while first introducing fabric effects stuck with glue on the surface of the support, I introduced sawdust in order to achieve a low relief. Selecting a rigid painting ground was specifically designed to minimise the risk of cracks, which in the end served as protection for the artworks. While I used vine-charcoal to outline major areas of the work, to achieve precision, details and form, the sawdust and fabric still helped to achieve quality surface without missing meaning and message.

## **5:02 Stage Two - Conceptualizing Form**

By Stage 2, I had a clear feeling of how an image would potentially evolve while considering shape, arrangement and format of the concept such as how it

will configure using stylisation, block planes and geometric zed rope. By drawing inspiration and experimenting with traditional Yoruba patterns and motifs in palace arts and ritual objects, the centre began to take a rhythmic shape that conforms to Yoruba traditional characteristics, such as the *Bembe Drummer* in chapter 1, which is a portrayal of the different drums, and celebrations in Yoruba society and culture. This kind of sculptural effect is typical of the Ekiti and Ife Yoruba sub-style and the same can be said of other parts of the image.

I deliberately evolved a low-relief technique in this work to give a feeling of sculpture on two-dimensional surface. The form achieved with sawdust is manipulated with pallet knife effect, the sawdust stuck with glue. Once the detail is achieved, I applied glue solvent with water and unmixed glue with smaller size 2 brushes on the image to stick it properly to the painting surface.

### **5:03 Stage Three - Integration of Other Component**

In this stage, most regions of the image were well covered with relief sawdust and glue. Movements and rhythms of forms are introduced; the image is set while the pallet knife is used to produce discernible forms. However, I intentionally added glue solvent with little water to enable me achieve permanence and durability. On completion the work is heavy but still on the bare floor to ensure strong and smooth adherence in the piece.

### **5:04 Stage Four - Experimentation with Hues**

In Stage 4, I experimented on chromatic hues while spherical forms, and the seeming arrangement of twin figures are merged together in spherical unity and coherence with sable brush sizes 1 and 3 symmetrically join different parts of this painting together. Based on *Ijala* artistic frame the result conforms to traditional

carving proportion and is adorned with line patterns and many geometrical configurations.

The arrangement of the focal point in drape effect is a reflection of the presence of water spirit, ritual, signs, symbols and re-creation of geometrical planes with rope sensation in form and naturalistic in proportion. Although the resulting image is, an eye-catching imaginative re-creation its links to Yoruba oral poetry motifs and *Ijala* in particular are evident in the facial features of figures and in their costumes. This inter-relation of traditional motifs in new interpretations further extends the meaning of the artwork beyond mere ethnomusicology. Materials used in this image seem unnatural, yet I was able to display the meaningful interpretation of the old as a new sensation by introducing stylisation and abstraction with the rope and charcoal pencil used to demarcate forms, variations and shapes. This was a highly productive stage for this study. The full naturalistic effects achieved in the artwork could be mistaken for a cement sculpture, going by its smooth rendition.

### **5:05 Stage Five - Detailing**

By Stage 5, one could notice details in form and the gradual departure from traditional forms. Here one notices element of reading with carefulness in building depth, tensions and relating all other component parts and the mechanics of proportions to achieve 'aesthetic emotion'. All the forms and communication motifs are supported with colours, planes and concept of balance with the mark of Yoruba ritualistic signs and symbols.

This effect is intentional and was achieved with brush lines of circles and minor variations with curvilinear and idiomatic expression of Yoruba *aso-oke*

tradition. At this level, I was able to make aesthetic judgements and to achieve meaning with a new template of flowing stroke of dramatic rope arranged systematically using curvilinearity and planarity to depict the common *adire* fabric design in low relief form. The floating technique, and drape of pigment introduced in the foreground is a feature of modernity. The employment of deep hues of umber brown, Prussian blue, deep green, lighter hue of yellow achieve sweetness and rhythm in this work.

### **5:06 Stage Six - Final Rendition**

This is the last stage when the process has been completed and all component-anticipated parts achieved. This last section is in most instances, interplay between complete naturalism and semi-abstractions. I deliberately brightened up chromatic hue in a radical departure from the usual norm associated with other modern art works. The success and features achieved in this stage can also be seen in Stage 5 where textures are sparingly used. The result is a highly stylised geometric effect with symbolic connotations. The image depicts a close family unit fusing together as one as a reflection on and as an interpretation of common cultural collective consciousness as I the activities of guilds, the common spaces they share and the ritual ties that the coastal Yoruba society expects between guilds of hunters.

### **5:07 Synthesis Interpreting Coastal Yoruba Motifs, Signs and Patterns**

This painting (Plate 72, p.217) sets out to explore the effect of pallet knife on forms of coastal Yoruba cultural values in one sense. The aim was to decide and

establish the kind of collages suitable at the end of which I opted to make use of found materials. Like velvet, fabric, woodcuts, liquid (glue) solvent, hue, pebbles, pennies, and masking-effects chalk in combination with printed-paper with graphic writings or numbering such as figures to illustrate, distil and interrogate various counting systems and philosophical propositions. To create rhythm and visual language I used pigment spread out on textural background.

I started by painting bright hues on the picture surface and then moved up the lines of communication and the focal point simultaneously. The stocked woodcuts of different patterns, motifs and symbols are reflective of Yoruba patterns, symbolism, signs, and motifs shaped in all different sizes, and deliberately arranged in a very modest structure that communicate information on Yoruba societies.

### **5:08 Stage Two - Placement of Form with Palette Knife Effect**

Second phase is achieved stylistically by joining a number of hue effects using palette-knife. The first things done here were to fill the surface area with glue-solvent and to introduce partial touches of paste up of colour and application of collages. The process draws on coastal Yoruba traditional carving expressed loosely with line patterns but with a lot of geometric configuration. At this Stage, I had been considering how the composition would capture patterns, signs and motifs of coastal Yoruba. Throughout this period, in my process I was more patient with the arrangement format while infusing woodcuts, creating patterns and symbols fabrics cut into various motifs.

In practice, I stylised with splashes of adhesives to give room for collages while experimenting with elements of cubism in order to represent multi-facets of Yoruba cosmos and traditions.

### **5:09 Stage Three - Decoration of Form**

By Stage 3, the composition was becoming clearer with illustrative and decorative forms and shapes. At this point, a construction of paper collages, woodcuts and fabric were systematically arranged while paste up structures that conveyed likely contemporary scenarios and sensations were used in a more explicit format. Splashes of sawdust in circles were stuck on strategically to depict an unbroken relationship among family members, communities and extended relations. The placement of rectangular pieces of woodcuts into various iconographies in various sizes, lengths and shapes denote people, communal life and traditions. The painting confronts viewers with composite scenes in the manner of figure caught in active physical actions during a festival.

### **5: 10 Stage Four - Revealing Information and Assemblage of Patterns**

By Stage 4, I had assembled more information on patterns and motifs to be used to experiment on turning meaning and messages with identifiable themes and content and depiction of figures. Colour distribution at this point is immensely important in this picture and in the component parts of the studio research. After fusing all these collages, I waited for months to allow glued materials to dry fasten to the surface before applying detailing of motifs.

I wrestled with how the work will speak of itself and how to capture a single template of communal life and tradition within particular setting bearing in mind

that the image may or may not communicate effectively. I resolved after some time that this work needed to be done with care and patience in order to achieve the essential details in forms, meaning, symbols and patterns in the painting in an interactive manner.

## **5: 11 Stage Five - Interpretation of Form**

This is the last stage and the result of reflections and re-interpretation of Yoruba motifs, signs and patterns is undoubtedly expressionist and succeeds in depicting a teeming matrix of human existence. At this point, a common tendency has been achieved through the application of material with professional skills and elements of 'technical theory'. Through the paintings, I re-interpreted coastal Yoruba world and their existence in modern and contemporary times in a bid to highlight the progression from ancient indigenous tradition to global world of art, two features that are conspicuously evident in the template.

My intention was to achieve elements and effects of permanence, rhythm, and aesthetic emotions derived from the motifs, patterns and signs based on Yoruba palace art tradition. The result is a light-toned opaque artwork achieved and worked out of a dark background. The essence of the dark background colour was to avoid confusion in the component parts. This is specifically made to increase the transparency of the different hues applied thickly with both pallet knife and brushes. It has been important to me to reconsider why, and how the paintings done in this research have passed through several stages and being subjected to different working methods in order to achieve multi-level communication in the templates.

Thus far, I have been employing "action" process and craft rather loosely, as stages of visual representation, an idea and means to achieve my goal. However, this action engagement can be seen ultimately as not relevant while espousing a position conventionally associated with craft design but conceived as suitable for my practice employing all kinds of process involving action and interaction. Rather than presenting the practical process as a fixed attempt of doing alone, this research practice analyses process and product as an inter-connected approach, an attitude, or a habit of action that is designed to arrive at logical conclusion.

I have, through this study cross-examined and categorized coastal Yoruba art form into distinct phases/ styles; "the traditional", "the colonial or the transitional" and "the independent or modern" periods in an attempt to delineate coastal Yoruba forms, or perhaps African visual arts, into definable time-space identities. Although, it appears in the liminal space between art and technology, handcraft and object, there is need and place to consider different analytical perspectives of space and of time in transition. I sought to evaluate the reactions of artistic mediums and contexts within a framework of historical, global and contemporary modernity perspectives. However, art is often conceived as something abstract and immaterial, and yet much recent neuron-scientific tendencies are achieved in some instance such as the recording of coastal Yoruba *Ijala* psyche and contemporary modes of artistic practice.

It is in this sense that I do not wish to re-open debates on the inferiority of craft in relation to art. It has been a "problem" from the twentieth century to present or analyse the idea of craft, which has generated or fuelled all sorts of artistic and social changes in the past. Moreover, this will continue to do so in the explanation for future reading. Indeed, 'paintings like Mondrian's, which espouse a transcendental logic for art and radically deny their own materiality, turn out to



be more the exception than the rule in modern art' (Adamson, 2007, p.5). To this end, the only ideas available or embodied by craft (materials) are not only psychologically useful in this research project, but also equally conceptually suitable. Professionally, the implications of lines and the sensual characteristics of certain materials are important. For instance, the glossiness of lots of the pigments, glue, fabric and solvents suggest the kinds of tools used at some level or degree, both generate creative tensions that keep pressing for questions of form, category, and identity, all these are open for further investigation.

This indicates that thinking - whether in alert or relaxed modes generates different kinds of novelty through materiality. One of this is to incorporate into the artwork, experimentations into material and process at various points and order. By deploying an inclusive strategy of profiling materials, artists and their strategy, I draw my inference from Nigerian/African and Western conventions, thus drawing inspiration and practices from a genealogical mix of techniques and epochs. These frameworks were used to interrogate the understanding of coastal Yoruba or African arts for a definition of modernism in its visual arts by evaluating the process of named paintings from expositions one to the final stage. Since the philosophy and character of any age remains reflected in the artworks created within it, it was possible to explore the historiography of coastal Yoruba histories and arts through material experimentations.

This materialisation, in one sense captures or embodies idealist supposition in its reflections of the past, present and future of the coastal Yoruba cultural space. The experiment reveals that coastal Yoruba art tradition has developed over the years since inception of this project. My particular approach to research into material (art medium) is one that shifts through memory and material culture blending notions of anthropology, history, globalisation and culture, through the

process of dialogue (story telling). By utilizing improvisation techniques and experimenting on found object in an organic method of exchanging communication, I have been able to make deeper connections and encounter threads of common memories and ritualistic representations of coastal Yoruba societies. Suffice to say that I am engaging with issues of oral communication in an organic and ordered format but through a fluid process of exchange. This was in effect, finding diverse and flexible ways of interacting and communicating like a thread that expands and shrinks, connects, reconnects and traces back histories. Importantly, understanding many of these variables of novel tendencies in art practice as displayed in the work stages helped me to achieve novel paintings.

However, this understanding may vary depending on scope and materials available. Thus, while it has been possible to find diverse and flexible ways of interacting and communicating specific ideas and meanings like a thread that expands, reflects and traces back, the artworks ultimately captures a collective memory as well as archiving tradition and modernism in coastal Yoruba art historiography. This approach pushes past realistic vision and times and exposes them to different contemporary conceptions.

## 6.01 Conclusion

This research so far has been able to reveal the prominence of patterns, signs and motifs in coastal Yoruba arts. The study provides a new and important shift in how we may read the purposes of crafts, patterns and oral arts traditions impacted by influences of modernism. These new advancement and influences have led to the adoption of several approaches in *adire* textile production and woodcarvings, which have inevitably influenced and transformed contemporary coastal Yoruba art forms.

The overall aims of this research are to critically investigate, shed-light on and explore the creative patterns of the coastal Yoruba tradition with a view:

- (i) To investigate the development of contemporary coastal Yoruba of Nigeria's artistic tradition from indigenous roots.
- (ii) To investigate whether this artistic tradition and by implication contemporary African arts are unique in styles and processes or imitations of Western styles or the product of two artistic traditions and influences, African and European.
- (iii) To examine the informing theories behind the paintings and drawings of coastal Yoruba land in Nigeria and;
- (iv) To analyse and document the forms, meanings, signs and artistic motifs in arts and crafts of Nigeria's coastal Yoruba with a view to eliciting the indigenous African thoughts behind them.

Chapter 1 discussed the background to the study, the theoretical framework as well as establishing the practice-based component and the research methodology, the scope and focus of the research and the action practice component. It further provided a background for the study and distinguished the coastal Yoruba as a sub-group of the Yoruba, whose arts have not been explored or studied, and are sometimes mistaken for other sections of Yoruba society.

Chapter 2 looked at the literature review and discussed the arts and crafts of Nigeria alongside the coastal Yoruba art forms in terms of how the art forms are viewed and their places in global art. This section discussed arts and artists in modern, contemporary and global contexts and draws on information and discussions by art writers, art historians and early writers and critics, and on claims made by the formalists and cubist's arts movements since the turn of the twentieth century. Both groups robustly analysed many art forms across the world from a religious point of view.

The findings about Yoruba aesthetic principles, philosophy, political order and complex religion as they affect the production of art (design works) are reviewed while the peculiarity, individuality and uniqueness of this research are also analysed. The study of Nigerian and coastal Yoruba art forms starts from antiquity through modern to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in relation to whether they are original or part of Western influences that started with colonialism. Chapter 2 also discusses the emergence of Awori and coastal Yoruba arts as part of the culture of Lagos State from the first contact with the Benin kingdom in the later part of 15<sup>th</sup> century and then with the Europeans and to the present. This fulfils research aim and objective No. 2.

Chapter 3 analysed and documented features of the physical arts of the coastal Yoruba, the inherent themes available in studio practice and the detailed

analysis of the mixed media (studio exploration). Although it was difficult to trace artistic histories of artefacts such as wood sculptures in *Obas'* palaces and in village shrines to specific centuries because of decay of wood-based arts brought about by climatic and natural conditions of the artworks (presentation), writings on Yoruba myths, legends and personal accounts given by old village historians provided an undeniably rich source of information. A lot of the historical accounts of tradition and arts from antiquity up to the contemporary period of coastal Yoruba and Nigerian arts started many centuries after geographical settlements but mostly with the introduction of formal western style education. All the same, the colonial arts workshop centres led by Murray (see Chapter 1) and the incursions of foreign religious and missionary activities affected the way Yoruba, Nigerian and African arts have been viewed and studied.

The Chapter 3 also gave an in-depth description of paintings and drawings of some common patterns, symbols and motifs of the coastal Yoruba whilst recreating how these cultural iconographies can be used in a new context. This chapter also analysed the paintings and drawings produced in this research. The images found in this section are knitted and mapped using qualitative methods of research in order to highlight the materials and materiality of the forms and the techniques adopted in the production of the images. This chapter equally extended beyond description of the materials used to a discussion of materials beyond Nigeria and African art.

This section fulfils research objectives three and four by producing a template for readers on how to read and interpret coastal Yoruba art forms and perhaps Nigerian arts. The template provides illustrations of how motifs, signs and patterns of Yoruba *Ijala*, palace arts, social and ritual ceremonies and oral

communications such as in oral poetry, drumming and music, feature in an understanding and interpretation of coastal Yoruba arts.

Chapter 4 is about Studio practice. In effect, it analysed how through the combination of particular processes, tools and materials, the images that form the studio component of the research were created. The chapter discussed how some information obtained on field trips were incorporated and used in experiments and these were interpreted as ideas, themes, meanings and forms in the resulting images and paintings.

Chapter 5 explained and discussed the stages leading to the creation of selected bodies of works and how these have been drawn from coastal Yoruba iconography. It discussed new interpretations of the motifs, patterns and signs of the coastal Yoruba and culture as part of growing body of colonial, postcolonial, modern and contemporary Nigerian and African arts.

Chapter 6 explains the conclusion of the research work, and equally captured the overall aims of the research. The chapter discusses the contributions of the research findings to knowledge. It proffers some arguments about what African art connotes suggesting that the artworks used ought to be examined in relation to the history and art of the coastal Yoruba people whose cultural values are distinctive among other arts in Nigeria and Africa.

In brief, this work has critically investigated, established and made original contributions to knowledge in the following ways:

- (i) The study has analysed the uniqueness, originality and interpretation of the coastal Yoruba iconographies as an extension of the creative impulse of the Yoruba artists at large.

- (ii) This study has developed a new style of painting and display of creative techniques characterised by socio-cultural content. The result is an affirmation and contribution to a growing demand for new modes of conceptualisation; especially those devoid of organised skills. Art cannot be art if it is devoid of craftsmanship and aesthetics. *Ona* art, as a generic Yoruba term for art recognises this factor of creativity in painting, in sculpture as well as in textile. Therefore classifying one as superior to the other is an unnecessary limitation to the full appreciation of visual arts. The Yoruba have no such distinctions since the boundaries between their various zones of existence and worldview intersect and blur rather than polarize. This feature of Yoruba culture carries through to their arts where although the themes, motifs, patterns and signs explored have come mainly from *Ijala* tradition, palace arts, social and ritual ceremonies and oral communications such as in oral poetry, drumming and music. These different forms exist together in a linked multi-layered relationship that makes up the Yoruba universe and worldview.
- (iii) This study has contributed in the area of historical discourse in Yoruba art for researchers that may wish to research into other areas of Nigerian and Africa arts in general.

Through these paintings and drawings of coastal Yoruba arts, I have dwelt on and theorized the issues concerning authenticity, originality and conceptual art forms. In practice, the studio work established, discussed, synthesised and experimented with new materials as well as discovered a new terrain for interpreting and rendering coastal Yoruba art in collages, wood, rope, sand and fabrics.

This research has offered ideas of painting with both pallet-knife and mixed media techniques in the endless process within the purview of contemporary art. The paintings produced in studio component of this research function as a window on the roles that histories and ethnography play in the understanding of Yoruba arts and culture. These trends reveal the beauty inherent in the art forms of the coastal Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria. This study has contributed information on how the coastal Yoruba view their art and what it is meant for in the contexts of religion, art practice and within the different cultural spaces where the functional and aesthetic in arts combine.

## 6.02 Recommendations

The researcher has probed into the nature and claims made by the formalists, by early explorers and anthropologists, who out of curiosity wrote about, named, and labelled African and Nigeria arts on their own but foreign arts concepts and practices. Based on their limited understanding of the artefacts they found, they discussed the art forms in the context of culture claiming that the entire arts of the Yoruba people and Nigeria including other African arts at large, were mere extensions, copies or pastiche of Western art (Adepegba, 1995). The study has explored the art forms, signs, symbols, verbal (oral art) communication and physical art of coastal Yoruba people of Nigeria, and how the forms can be viewed differently in the contexts of functionality. On the basis of this research I make the following recommendations:

- (i) There should be more studies on functionality and meaning in contemporary Yoruba and Nigerian arts.



(II) Researchers and commentators on Nigerian and African arts and artists should conduct more research on other ethnic groups on how such arts like coastal Yoruba art, can contribute to development of Nigerian art schools.

(III) There should be proper investigation of Yoruba art forms, colours, symbolism and patterns with respect to contemporary art practice. The findings should be analysed for their meanings, messages, and contents against the background of changes and new developments in art history and pedagogy.

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## PLATES



Plate 1: Map of Lagos State © the Centre for Lagos Studies (AOCOED) Otto-Ijanikin Nigeria.

<http://www.google.com/map-of-lagos-state.jpeg>





Sign / Symbol	Name	Function / Meaning
	Eyo the masquerades	This symbolise the second in command within Eko - Lagos state and equally stands for the social status of the Eyo Masquerades
	Ooya- the comb	The motif represents the comb used by hair plaiters or hair dressers It is taken from several patterns of adire (batik fabric) work
	Eko ree : This is Lagos	This is a representation of different lines and curves which seems to stand for bridges within the Lagos and its environs
	The World is round	The circle carrying a fan-like illustration is representing the world meaning the world is round

Plate 2: Abiodun Kafaru - Yoruba Orality -Verbal Art



Plate 3: Abiodun Kafaru - *Dialogue I*  
Oil on Canvas



Plate: 4 Abiodun Kafaru - *Dialogue II*  
Oil on Canvas



Plate 5: Abiodun Kafaru *Excitement - (Lagos social life)* Oil on Canvas



Plate 6: Abiodun Kafaru Ariya (*Merry Maker*) Oil on Canvas



Plate 7: Abiodun Kafaru Efe (*Ceremony*) - Oil on Canvas





Plate 8: Abiodun Kafaru *Craft Men - Musical Instruments* - Oil on Canvas



Plate 9: Yinka Shonibare 2001 (*The Swing*)



Plate 10 & 11, Pablo Picasso, [www.picasso.fr/us](http://www.picasso.fr/us)

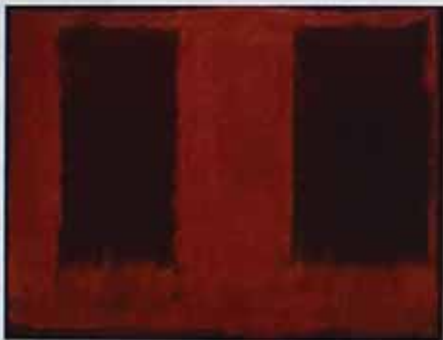














Plate 12 & 13: Mark Rothko, [www.nga.gov/feature/rothkosplash.html](http://www.nga.gov/feature/rothkosplash.html)















Plate 14: Eyo Adamu Orisa (Masquerade)



Table 1: Abiodun Kafaru *Translation of Yoruba words Verbal Art-(Oral) Communication*



ART IN INDIGENOUS COASTAL YORUBA SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SPACE	ARTISTIC SIGNS, SYMBOLS, PATTERNS AND MOTIFS	ORIGIN, SOURCES AND CONTEXT	NAME, MEANING AND USE	RESEARCHER'S ADAPTATIONS
 <p><i>Kanna-Konno</i> Star</p>	<p>Star motif.</p>	<p>From nature; sky and night and Yoruba traditional deity and spirit veneration</p>	<p><i>Kanna-Konno</i> symbol of strength and authority among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria. Used to define highest deity among the Eyo masquerades</p>	
<p><i>Obiri- Yipo Aiye</i> "The world is round" a Yoruba Proverb</p>	<p>Circle shapes of the universe.</p>	<p>Nature; visible and invisible universe. Originates from human social interactions and metaphysical encounters.</p>	<p><i>Obiri-Yipo-Aiye</i> Used in proverbs and reflections on the physical and metaphysical universes of the Yoruba. Represents the circle of life and human existence retribution, future, reincarnation</p>	
 <p><i>Eyo Adimu Head</i></p>	<p>Spirituality, power, leadership, colour, status in Eyo masquerade.</p>	<p>Ritual, social, private and public contexts; Eyo sociocultural masquerade performance</p>	<p><i>Eyo-Adamu</i> Orisha Highest-ranking Eyo masquerade in Lagos State. Represents strength and spirituality.</p>	
<p><i>Obiri Yipo Aiye, II</i> The world is round  Aiye esan a Yoruba idiom  Difference here is explicitly</p>	<p>Circle/ sphere as shape of the known universe.</p>	<p>Fashion and fabric; social interaction, routine lifestyle, divination instruments, indicates the unknown and mysterious in the visible.</p>	<p><i>Adire</i> The illustration reflects the cyclical continuity of the Yoruba universe and its multi-layered symbolical levels.</p>	







<p>dialectical opposition between ancient and modern</p>				
 <p><i>Oju-awo -fin</i></p> <p>The eyes of the diviner sees the hidden mysteries that cannot be seen by non-initiates</p>	<p>Circles, lines, and shapes, animal form (tortoise)-batik design.</p>	<p>Myth, legends and history; Religious and social functions and practices.</p>	<p><i>Oju-awo-fin</i> (Divination tray) The image is a symbol of religious power and worship among the coastal Yoruba; symbolises the authority and power of divination priest, the secrets and mysteries of life.</p>	
<p><i>Eko - Ree</i></p> <p>(This is Lagos), a common saying among Lagosians and other people about the challenges of living in Lagos.</p>	<p>Bridges and angular shapes and storied buildings; the first place the structures were built in pre-colonial and colonial Yoruba and Nigeria.</p>	<p>Social and daily conversations and a slogan depicting development of Lagos State.</p>	<p><i>Eko - Ree</i> (This is Lagos); the expression is common and reflects the huge social and technological developments that define Lagos as the economic and cultural hub of modern Nigeria. It also highlights the unusual, strange and familiar about how people behave or may act in Lagos.</p>	
 <p><i>Alangba - Secret</i></p>	<p>Myths, life experience and relationships</p>	<p>From nature; the world of animals and plants, often the subject of proverbs and wise-sayings</p>	<p><i>Alangba</i>; the lizard, a symbol of secrets and mysteries in Yoruba culture, used in proverbs, represents secrets or important information, stands for revelation among the Yoruba.</p>	
<p><i>Gbo-gbo Alangba Lo Dakun Dele</i></p>	<p>Signs and motifs of secrets, mysteries of life and Information about human existence and expression of how Yoruba people conceive of the world.</p>	<p>From nature; folktales, legends.</p>	<p>All lizards lie flat; a saying that all people walk-around the town and city, and one can see only the visible but not the invisible world.</p>	

<p><i>Yebeyebe</i> (Floral design)</p>	<p>Shapes, lines and colour, patterns, circle and rhythm.</p>	<p>Fashion and fabric decoration, among family a life style of the coastal Yoruba people, the Awori and Ijebu tradition. Indicates close relationship with family tradition.</p>	<p><i>Yebeyebe</i> Reflects relationships among the Yoruba, represents a family tradition.</p>	
<p><i>Esu-Deity</i> The Devil</p>	<p>Lines, form, patterns, and mystery.</p>	<p>Nature, legends; invisible originate from metaphysical encounters with the gods, goddesses and Iron.</p>	<p><i>Esu -Statue</i> Some are expressed with iron and wooden (effigies), symbol of religious power among cults, totem and for safe driving among transporters driving within the communities.</p>	
<p><i>Ika-O-D-Ogba</i> All fingers are not equal</p>	<p>Form, shape; lines, and colour, class status</p>	<p>Routine lifestyle depicts a vital aspect of Yoruba life and human existence.</p>	<p><i>Ika - O-dogba</i> The image is symbol of destiny, fortune, and sometimes come with the belief that one's hands bring luck depending upon what you face in life among the Yoruba culture.</p>	
<p><i>Oju-Ekun (Oju Oba)</i> The Lion Eye The Kings Eye</p>	<p>Circle, form, shapes and lines; colour myths</p>	<p>Myths, legends religious power class status among Obas and high Chiefs and Baale.</p>	<p><i>Oju Ekun ( OjuOba)</i> Represents the eye of the king (Oba) "The lion Eye" meaning that nobody questions the authority of the king. The dominant red hue expresses the power carrirf of the Oba.</p>	
<p><i>Kasowopo-Aso Ebi</i> Co-operative</p>	<p>Lines, colour, form; designs, space and history.</p>	<p>Legends, social functions and practices among the coastal Yoruba people and belief system.</p>	<p><i>Kasowopo(Aso-Ebi) co-operative</i> This illustration reflects family relationship and co-operation among family members such as house warming, coronation of new Oba and chieftaincy; naming ceremony and burial rites. A collective motif and patterns.</p>	







<p><i>Jakan, (Ona- ara)</i></p> <p>Craft design- Embroidery</p>	<p>Shapes, design, texture, status symbol.</p>	<p>Fashion and fabric design and history and creative practices.</p>	<p><i>Jakan (Ona-ara)</i></p> <p>Creativity and design of fabric status and class among the noble and elites. Express wealth and sense of beauty.</p>	
<p><i>Orita-Meta</i></p> <p>Six Junction</p>	<p>Lines, shapes, mysteries of life; indicates the unknown to the non-initiates.</p>	<p>Myth, history, ritual and indicates sacrifice.</p>	<p>The image is a symbol of spiritual cleansing and mysteries of life. This is an illustration of where six major roads cross each other. The Yoruba believe that spirits dwell in and exist at this interjection.</p>	
<p><i>Oju-Awofin</i></p> <p>Spiritual eye of the diviner</p>	<p>Colour, shapes, effects; lines and circle.</p>	<p>Adire fashion design and divination tray.</p>	<p><i>Oju-Awofin</i></p> <p>The image is a religious cultural practice.</p>	
<p><i>Gbagede-Ojude - Oba</i></p> <p>Floral motif</p>	<p>Shapes, circle and social functions and religious power.</p>	<p>Fashion, legends; and religious power and celebration of coastal Yoruba.</p>	<p><i>Gbagede-Ojude Oba</i></p> <p>The illustration is a symbol of power among the ruling class.</p>	
<p>Togetherness</p> <p><i>Aso-Ebi Ankara</i></p>	<p>Colour, shapes, and forms.</p>	<p>Social politics; interaction; indicates the relationship among family members.</p>	<p>Togetherness Unity</p> <p><i>Aso-Ebi Ankara</i></p> <p>Symbol of togetherness, this is very common with communal setting, family members and sometimes between husband and wife and children.</p>	
	<p>Colour Circle.</p>	<p>Ritual pot expresses sociocultural mysteries of lifecycle.</p>	<p><i>Igba-Oye</i></p> <p>Symbol of rituals and ordination among initiates and Chieftaincy within family and cult initiations.</p>	






<p><i>Igba-Oye</i></p> <p>Chieftaincy pot</p>				
<p><i>Omolangidi</i></p> <p>Effigies wooden sculptures in three dimensional form</p>	<p>Colour, form; shape rhythm, texture.</p>	<p>Adire-textile design</p> <p>Myths, ritual power and religious functions and practice among the Yoruba.</p>	<p><i>Omolangidi</i></p> <p>Depicts deity and fertility among the coastal Yoruba. Human and agricultural fertility, prosperity and high farm yield.</p>	
<p><i>Irawo-Lagba</i></p> <p>Star Chine</p>	<p>Line, colour; star shape.</p>	<p>Fabric-design</p> <p>Adire-Eleko</p>	<p>Unity among cultures, among sub-ethnic groups living within Lagos State. Symbol of co-existence among cultural groupings in Nigeria.</p>	









<p><i>Eko-Gbarada</i> (Lagos State is Developing). Mega-city</p>	<p>Colour, shapes, form movement and history.</p>	<p>Fabric effects indicate lifestyle and mass movement, crowd of people living across the state of Lagos and its Environ.</p>	<p><i>Eko Gbarada</i></p> <p>Eko Lagos State is fast developing.</p>	
<p><i>Awori-Tedo</i>, Settlement Area Lagos State.</p>	<p>Circle, colour shape and movement.</p>	<p>Mat weaving and fabric design.</p>	<p>Awori ancient city settlement and ritual pot.</p>	

<p><i>Etutu</i></p> <p>Sacrifice</p>	<p>Form, colour, Spirituality and ritual.</p>	<p>From nature; plants and night traditional Yoruba shrine, deity; ritual practice.</p>	<p><i>Etutu</i></p> <p>The illustration represents a symbol of religious sacrifice and worship of deity and mysteries of life.</p>	
<p><i>Egbe-Imule</i> Cult Association</p>	<p>Circle, shapes form, lines and colour.</p>	<p>Legends, social and spiritual association</p>	<p><i>Egbe-Imule</i> Cult- the image is a symbol of , ritual power.</p>	
<p><i>Omiran</i></p> <p>Giant in the sun</p>	<p>Colour, lines, form and shapes.</p>	<p>Myths, religious and ritual power among cults in Yoruba land.</p>	<p><i>Omiran</i></p> <p>- is a reflection of ritual power among cult; deity, and spirituality; fertility gods. Strength and spiritual power among diviner.</p>	
<p><i>Aso-Agbara</i></p> <p>Charmed Wear- Yoruba fabric worn by the hunters and Akogun</p>	<p>Shape, pattern and lines</p>	<p>History spiritual power and strength among the worshipers of Ogun, Akan and ritual power.</p>	<p><i>Aso-Agbara</i></p> <p>Represents or reflects the power of hunters and Akogun</p>	
<p><i>Oju-Ayo Oloopon</i></p> <p>The local draft game.</p>	<p>Colour, form; patterns, circle and colonial influence.</p>	<p>Textile, Ankara, adire design; fashion, fabric and social functions and practices among Yoruba communities.</p>	<p><i>Oju Ayo Oloopon</i>- this represents a local game played by the elders during rest hour or after the day's work.</p>	
<p><i>Agbada-Nla Jakan</i></p> <p>ArewaHausa influence</p> <p>Embroidery</p>	<p>Lines, shapes, circle, texture.</p>	<p>Fashion, modernity and social interaction with other cultures.</p>	<p><i>Agbada-Nla Jakan</i>-embroidery design with patterns usually made to embellish the back and neck region of the cloth.</p>	



<p><i>Osanyin</i> Iron Staff- deity</p>	<p>Lines, colour, basic shapes and Birds, plants, roots and leaves.</p>	<p>Spiritual, mythology; history and reflects spiritual power of witches.</p>	<p><i>Adire fabric</i>, The image reflects Yoruba divinity and associated with healing art of herbal medicine. The staffs are iron rod surrounded by the power of witches.</p>	
<p><i>Owo O dogba</i> Fingers are not Equal</p> 	<p>Form, shapes and status.</p>	<p>Myth, legend status in human existence and mysteries, symbolical levels.</p>	<p>The illustration represents symbol of destiny, luck; fortune.</p>	
<p><i>Tesibu</i> Rosary for worship</p>	<p>Circle, power and patterns. communication</p>	<p>Religious, indicates power of worship and communication with almighty God.</p>	<p><i>Tesibu</i> represents symbol of worship and power of almighty God</p>	
<p><i>Aje-Ogugunuso</i> Riches and Wealth</p>	<p>Shapes, circles, lines, planes and mysteries of life.</p>	<p>Myth, legends, and fabric decoration routine life styles among Yoruba people.</p>	<p><i>Aje-Ogugunuso</i> This illustration depicts riches, prosperity and wealth creation. The cowries in the picture express the wealth sourced from the god of Olokun, water spirit deity.</p>	
<p><i>Orita-Merin</i> Four Junctions</p>	<p>Lines, shapes and star form.</p>	<p>History, and rituals and indicates spiritual Worship among the cults and witches.</p>	<p><i>Orita-merin</i> Reflection of rituals, sacrifice and cleansing among Yoruba. Symbolises and evokes power of spirits.</p>	

<p><i>Ebute- Eti Osa</i> Jetty-Riverine</p>	<p>Lines, nature and shapes.</p>	<p>Form nature and history social and routine life style, practices.</p>	<p><i>Ebute-Eti Osa</i> The illustration this trades river activity as source of wealth in coastal-Yoruba land.</p>	
<p>Islamic design</p>	<p>Colour, shapes, rhythm, geometric, form, balance.</p>	<p>History, religious worship and interaction with God.</p>	<p>The illustration is blessing from 'Allah' this adaption of Islamic readings of Muslim religion and prayers written on slate and wooden surface with the intention to receive from God.</p>	
<p><i>Sangbetto</i> Masquerade</p>	<p>Lines, shapes, space, symmetry and movement.</p>	<p>Myth, history and religious power and fertility figure. Spiritual and ritual function.</p>	<p><i>Sangbetto</i> a reflection of deity and ancestor. God of inspiration and works upon the hidden spirit of man.</p>	
<p><i>Ogboni Awo-Opa</i> Traditional-Cult Association-High Chiefs</p>	<p>Lines, colour, balance; shape, patterns.</p>	<p>Legends, myth, and religious worship and social practices among Egun people of Lagos State.</p>	<p><i>Ogboni Awo-Opa</i> Depicts highest-ranking chiefs among cult members. Symbolises power ritual, the white fabric design on the left shoulder reflects status and powers of each member.</p>	
<p><i>Igunuko Eso</i> Masquerades</p>	<p>Line, shapes, space and movement designs.</p>	<p>Legends, religious and social practices and ritual.</p>	<p><i>Igunuko Eso</i> Masquerades schema with very deep philosophical meaning associated by the fabric represented with the masquerades.</p>	

<p><i>Omolangidi (Ere)</i> Effigy wooden sculpture</p>	<p>Shapes; form and, patterns spaces; planes and geometric.</p>	<p>History, and myths fertility and life after death.</p>	<p><i>Omolangidi</i> The images reflect child fertility and life after death among family where twins are born and worship of deity.</p>	
 <p><i>Ewa -</i> Fertility Beans seed</p>	<p>Shapes; circle and patterns</p>	<p>Nature; ritual and sociocultural contexts</p>	<p><i>Ewa</i> Symbolises fertility and indicates multiple child birth and fruitfulness and times express twin birth. Gifts given to the ancestors in order to ensure safe child delivery and sacrifice to enable them live long.</p>	
 <p><i>Aje Eyo-Owo</i> Wealth profit- Money</p>	<p>Circle, colour and patterns and texture</p>	<p>History; legends and wealth creation indicates riches and abundance.</p>	<p><i>Aje-Eyo Owo</i> This illustration depicts wealth; the patterns reflects spiritual interwoven and connectivity ritual; with philosophical divine favour.</p>	
<p><i>Esu</i> Deity-The-Devil Statue/Effigy</p>	<p>Shapes; Circle; form and space; mysteries</p>	<p>History; religious worship and social cultural practices function among Yoruba cults.</p>	<p><i>Esu -</i> Deity depicts ritual and cult expressions. The form and the head is centred on appearing on the flanges of ancestral heads.</p>	
	<p>Shape; lines; colour-and patterns.</p>	<p>Social class and interaction; indicates identity and power among Eyo masquerades</p>	<p>Family-logo and reflection of tradition; history; legends and social functions.</p>	









<p><i>Igbafunfun</i> White Pot</p>	<p>Circle; patterns and colour.</p>	<p>History, legends and myths; ritual and religious worship, water spirit.</p>	<p><i>Igbafunfun</i> Spirituals pot symboliseAwori existence; settlement and veneration of water spirit and deity.</p>	
<p><i>Illedi</i> Initiation room and site</p>	<p>Lines; colour and patterns.</p>	<p>Mysteries; religious worship and history.</p>	<p><i>Illedi</i>-Represents Awoopa - cults-fraternity initiation; room and ritual sites of Awoopa cult members.</p>	
 <p><i>Labalaba</i> butterfly</p>	<p>Motif; colour shape; geometric shapes.</p>	<p>Adire; fabric design; social functions and practices</p>	<p>History and nature. Depicts local insects and it allows a simple geometric shape.</p>	
<p><i>Round about Orita</i> Tondamu Alajo</p>	<p>Circle, shapes and space; movement</p>	<p>History spirituality; nature visible and invisible universe.</p>	<p>This image depicts spiritual influence and metaphysical encounters with spirits</p>	
<p><i>Ayo-Oloopon</i> Game of two</p>	<p>Circle, colour, line pattern and form.</p>	<p>Ere-Alayo Games outdoor play among elders. Reflects interaction and social outing</p>	<p><i>Ayo- Oloopon</i> Represents local outdoor game among elders.</p>	
 <p><i>Alaja-Meta</i> Story Building</p>	<p>Lines, shapes and development</p>	<p>History;Western influence; and design construction</p>	<p><i>Alaja-Meta, Oke</i> Story-building this image represents history, building and Architecture colonial dominance and influence and the first story building in Nigeria.</p>	



Plate 15: *Eyo-Adamu Orisa* (Masquerade)



Plate 16: Eyo Adamu-Orisa Festivals



Plate 17: Pigment (Colour) and Palette



Plate 18: Oil Colours



Plate 21: Abiodun Kafaru - *Authority - Power*, Mixed Media on Canvas

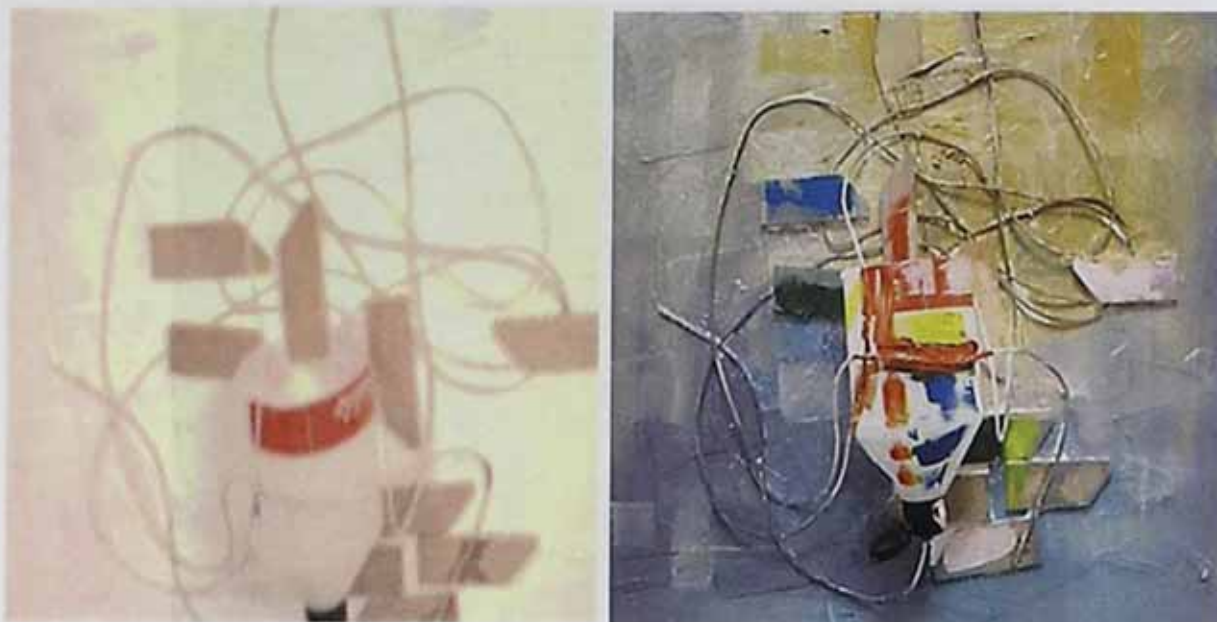


Plate 27/28: Abiodun Kafaru, *Untitled*, Mixed Media on Wood



Plate 29: Stage 1 - Alo-apagbe, *Masonite Board* 2'x2'





Plate: 30: Stage 2 - Alo-apagbe, Masonite Board 2'x2'



Plate 31: Stage 3 - Alo-apagbe, Masonite Board 2'x2'



Plate 32: Stage 4 - Alo-apagbe, Masonite Board, 2'x2'



Plate 33: Abiodun Kafaru: Textile fabrics (Adire), Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 34: Abiodun Kafaru: *Treasures*, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2'x2'



Plate 35: Abiodun Kafaru: *Fortune*, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2'x2'



Plate 36: Abiodun Kafaru: *Traditional Old Woven Fabric*, Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate: 37 Abiodun Kafaru: *Unequal Talents*, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2'x2'



Plate 38: Abiodun Kafaru: *Dundun (Drum)*, Mixed Media, 3'x3'



Plate 39: Abiodun Kafaru: *Egungun (Alarinjo)*, Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 40: Abiodun Kafaru: *Royal Instinct*, Oil on Canvas, 2'x3'



Plate 41: Abiodun Kafaru: *Ojuawo (Spiritual Eye)*, Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 42: Abiodun Kafaru: *Opo (Pillar - Post or House-Post)*, Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 43: Abiodun Kafaru: *Costume - (Egungun Fabric)*, Oil on Canvas, 2'x2'

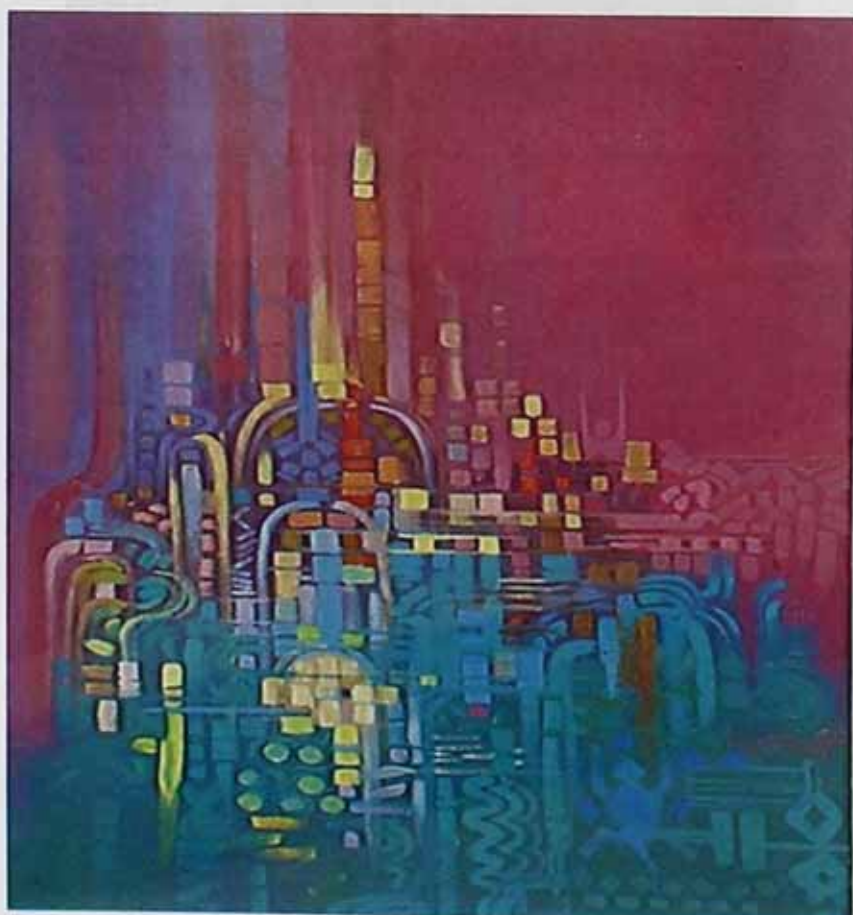


Plate 44: Abiodun Kafaru: *Agbada-Nla*, Oil on Canvas, 2'x3'





Plate 45: Abiodun Kafaru: *Ijala (Hunters Guilds)* Mixed Media, 3'x2'



Plate 46: Abiodun Kafaru: *Egungun (Masquerade) Alarape*, Oil on Canvas, 3'x3'



Plate 47: Abiodun Kafaru: *Untitled, Mixed Media on Wood, 2'x2'*



Plate 48: Abiodun Kafaru: *Folktales (Alo-Apagbe) Oil on Canvas, 3'x3'*



Plate 49: Abiodun Kafaru: *Divination Tray*, Acrylic on Paper, 2'x2'



Plate 50: Abiodun Kafaru: *Beauty (Ewa)* Acrylic on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 51: Abiodun Kafaru: *Fragment of Tradition I*, Acrylic on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 52: Abiodun Kafaru: *Fragment of Tradition II*, Oil on Canvas, 3'x3'



Plate 53: Abiodun Kafaru: *Yoruba Embroidery, Pencil on Paper, 2'x2'*

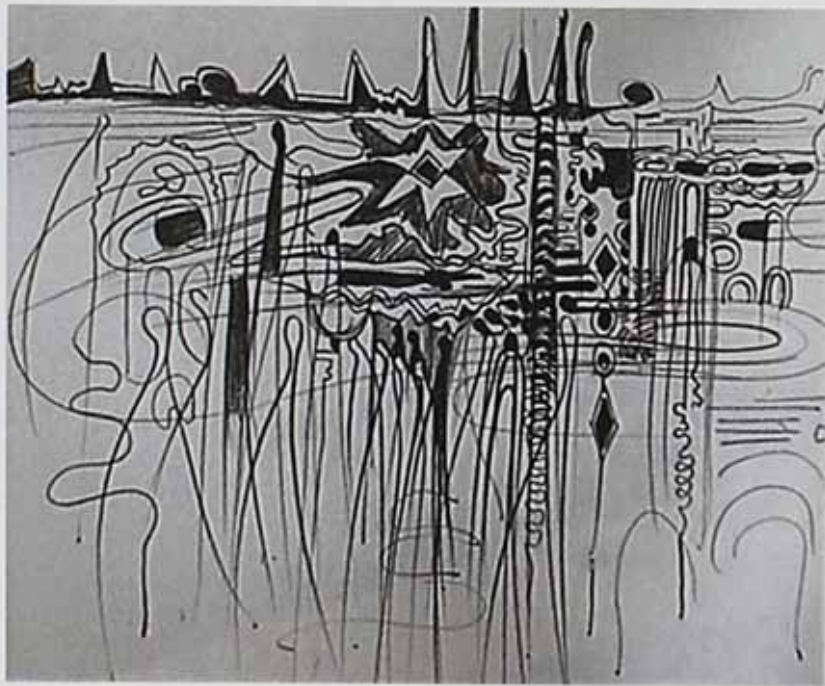


Plate 54: Abiodun Kafaru: *Oba's Palace Decoration, Pencil on Paper, 2'x2'*

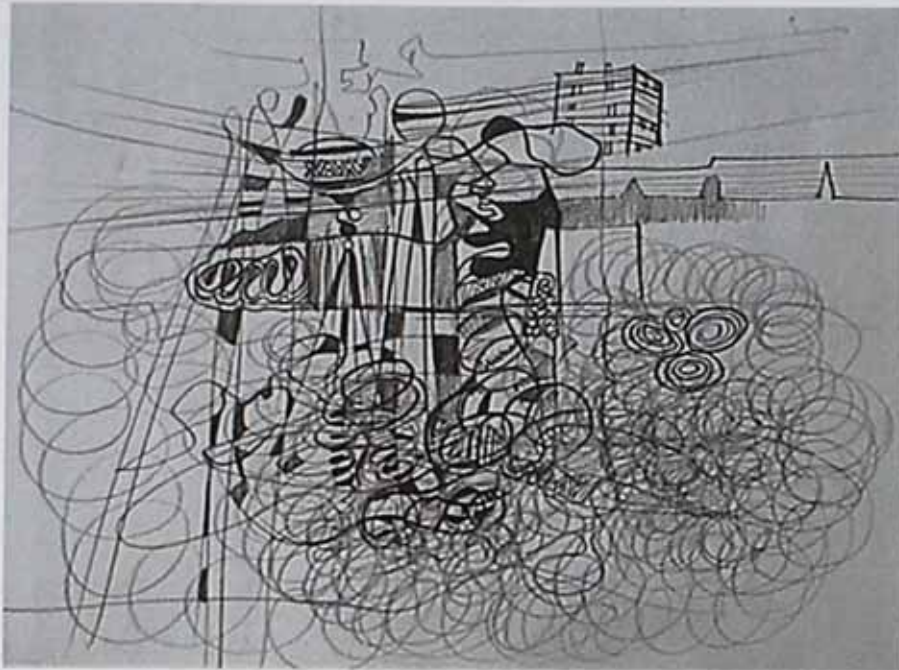


Plate 55: Abiodun Kafaru: *Centre of Excellence, Lagos*, Pencil on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 56: Abiodun Kafaru: *Opanbata (Staff of Office)*, Pastel on Paper, 2'x2'



Plate 57: Abiodun Kafaru: *Mask*, Acrylic on Paper, 2'x2'



Plate 58: Abiodun Kafaru: *Ancestral Spirit*, Mixed Media on Paper, 2'x2'



Plate 59: Abiiodun Kafaru: *Untitled Assemblage*, Acrylic on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 60: Abiiodun Kafaru: *Egungun (Masquerade)*, Pastel work on paper, 2'x2'



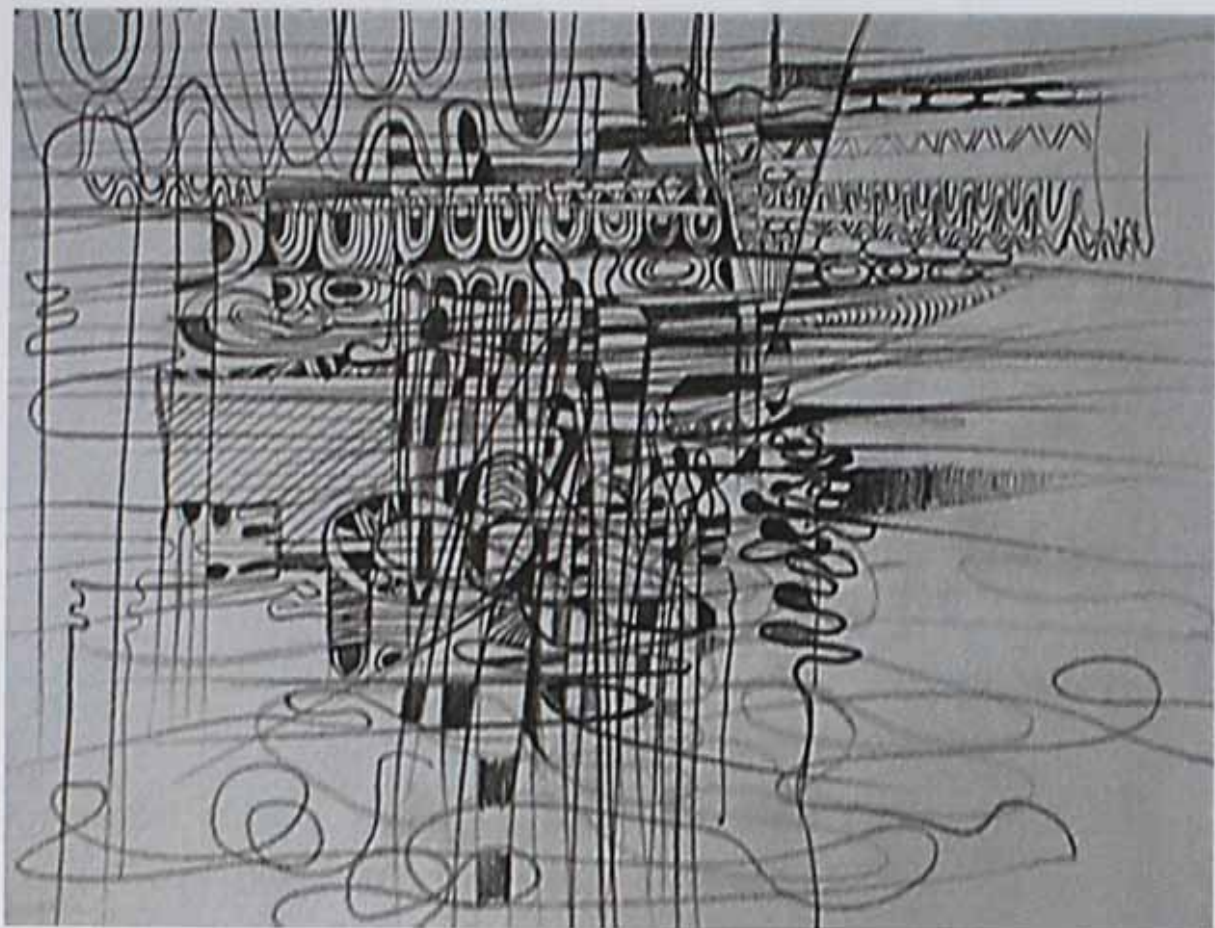


Plate 61: Abiodun Kafaru: *Palace Art*, Pencil on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 62: Abiodun Kafaru: *High-Chief* - Charcoal Drawing on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 63: Abiodun Kafaru: *Cult Art - Mixed Media on Canvas, 2'x2'*



Plate 64: Abiodun Kafaru: *Power (Destiny) - Pencil on paper, 2'x2'*

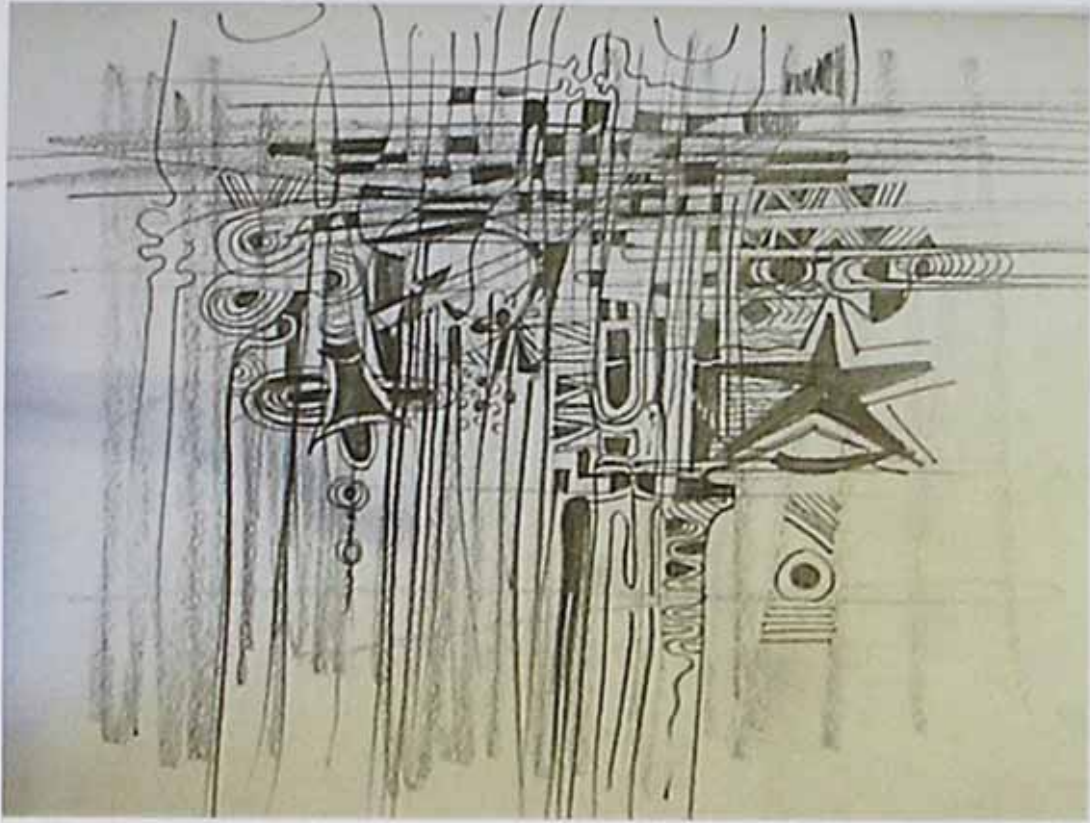


Plate 65: Abiodun Kafaru: *Pattern of Culture* - Pencil on paper, 2'x2'



Plate 66: Abiodun Kafaru: *Fortune Wheel*, Pastel and Charcoal on Paper, 2'x2'



Plate 67: Stage 1 - *Ijala Masonite Board, Mixed Media, 2'x2'*



Plate 68: Stage 2 - *Ijala Masonite Board, Mixed Media, 2'x2'*



Plate 69: Stage 3 - 45 Ijala Masonite Board, Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 70: Stage 4 - Ijala, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 71: Stage 5 - 48 Ijala, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 72: Stage 1 - *Pattern of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2'x2'



Plate 73: Stage 1 - *Pattern of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2' x 2'



Plate 74: Stage 2 - *Patterns of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2' x 2'



Plate 75: Stage 3 - *Patterns of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2' x 2'



Plate 76: Stage 4 - *Patterns of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2' x 2'





Plate 77: Stage 5 - *Patterns of Culture*, Masonite Board Mixed Media, 2' x 2'