

EXPLORATION IN HARNESSING OF STUDIO PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES IN MODERN PAINTING

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Abstract

New styles and techniques have evolved over the years in the journey of contemporary Nigeria visual art. Attempts have been made by artists and school of thought to harness new style of painting, by using various materials, methods and techniques. This explorative research has harnessed photography and studio painting techniques to produce studio paintings, through the process of synthesis. The Zaria Rebels were the pioneers of synthesis, combining two artistic styles from different cultures to create a work of art with global content and concepts. Some artists have also cross breed sculpture and painting. This paper attempts to explore ways studio painting and photographic techniques could be harnessed through digital media by using Apps, such as, Sketch Book, Ibis paint box to create modern paintings in a virtual studio. In this digital age there has been a movement of the mediums of art from their traditional support to the virtual studio through digital reconfiguration. A studio approach was used to create works of art without the usual stress often associated with the traditional analogue studio process. Photographs were imputed into digital media Apps where colors are applied. Attempts were initially made by using the traditional analog studio easel approach but the end products were far from the anticipated result. The digital media approach was convenient, better color application. Everything was done in the virtual studio, and the paintings were ready for framing.

Keywords: Techniques, Synthesis, Digital Media, Reconfiguration, Virtual Studio

Introduction

The Nigeria contemporary art scene has witnessed diverse ways of creating artworks by exploring materials and techniques which have given birth to different types of art forms. Egonwa (2007) stated that, "The history of art making in Nigeria is one of a long trek with many legs but slow movement" however visual artists continue to make efforts to break new grounds. The need to break new grounds and decompartmentalization of ideas and practices by contemporary Nigeria artists is long overdue. The paper attempts to show how photography and painting techniques can be

used to produce contemporary studio paintings. There are isolated cases of artists who have done several works, such as, 'Cast Painting' Ukpohor (2018) (*sculpture and painting*), *Paintocast and Paintograph* (Adeyemi 2014) and *Traditional Photographic Prints* (Ebewebirue, 2016) There is further need to avoid repetition of themes and concepts but cross pollination of techniques in various visual arts sub disciplines for innovative art forms. That is the crux of this paper. Painting which is also referred to as two dimensional expressions has before now been restricted to the physical analogue studio with easels and mediums such as oil paints, acrylics, water colors, Pastels, and inks, amongst others. The artist is therefore limited to the four walls of the studio. According to Egonwa (2018), "The art ecosystem must cease to be skeptical of art related/image making devices but see them as tools for boosting art practices". Emiemukumo (2017) also posits that, "the visual arts are aspects of technology; it is therefore not surprising to see the drive in studio artists to experiment with different technical media.

Digital Painting

Digital art is an artistic work or practice that uses digital technology as an essential part of the creative and presentation process. Lieser (2009) opined that, "since the 1970s, various names have been used to describe the process including computer art, multimedia art, and digital art is itself placed under the larger umbrella term of assisted new media art." Wands (2006), stated that, after some initial resistance, the impact of digital technology has transformed activities such as painting, sculpture, and music/sound art while new art forms. Such as net art, digital installation art, and virtual reality, have become recognized artistic practices. More generally the term digital artist is used to describe an artist who makes use of digital technologies in the production of art. In an expanded sense, 'digital art' is a term applied to contemporary art that uses the methods of mass production or digital art media

The Creative and Exploration Process

The work process has no relationship with AI, (Artificial Intelligence), it was basically a creative experimentation carried out in a virtual studio. The concepts and themes were creatively imagined, while some were inspired by the photographs. Preliminary sketches were carried out to ascertain and decide the placement of relevant objects. In cases where concepts are preconceived, the photographs were deliberately taken to suit the final outcome of the painting. Because of the explorative nature of the research, determining the final outcome of the works was ambiguous. Even in situations where the final outcomes were premeditated the work process is never finalized. The initial intention was to apply the paints manually in a conventional studio easel painting. That initiative was discarded because of its clumsiness and the inability to manipulate and synthesize the painting process with the photographs. The whole process became a reality when the

digital media was applied. The colours and the photographs became manageable. Findlay and Lumsden, (1988) define “the creative process as someone with the ability to solve a problem in a situation where the context of the problem and interpretation is unclear.” Boden (1994), also adds that this creative individual generates new ideals out of existing concepts with a result that is normally interesting. Cropley and Urban (2000), distinguish that ‘thinking’ involves the use of existing information to produce further information, and with reference to the problem solving character of ‘creativity’ they submit that it involves analyzing the particular form of the problem, selecting from among the masses of information available at any moment, relating new information to what is already known, combining elements of new and old information, evaluating newly emerging combinations, and communicating the results to others (Cropley & Urban, 2000). Lubart (1994) also stated that creativity is the capacity to produce novel or original work that fits with task constraints.

Strategies for Harnessing the Two Art Genres

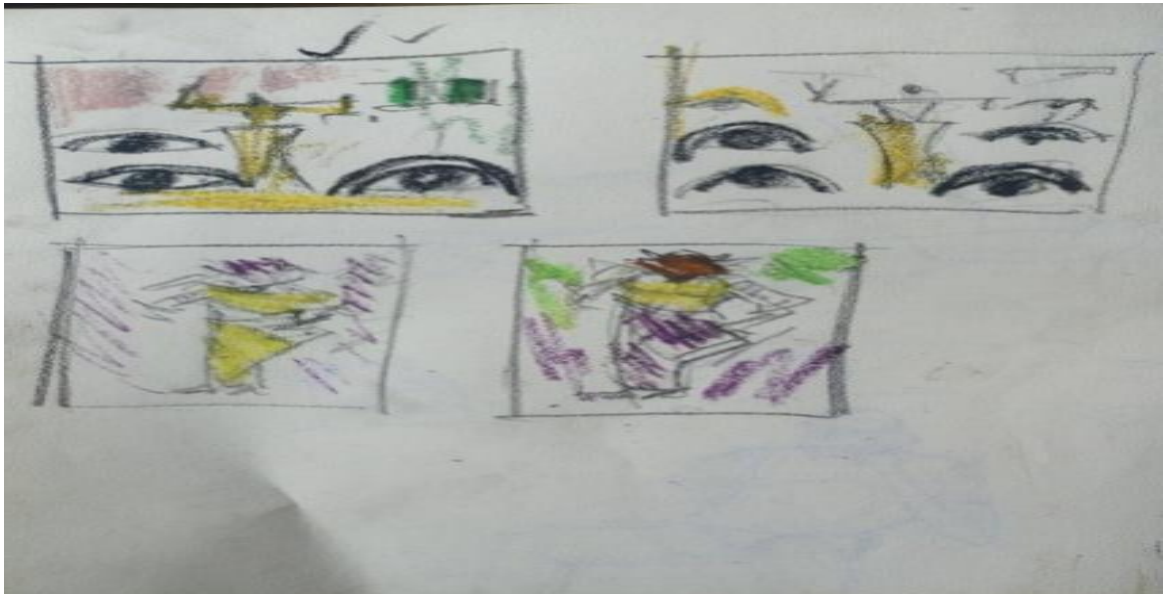
The procedure adopted is the practice led research and it is explorative. Visual languages, photographs, production methods, materials, and processes derivable from studio activities were intellectualized through evidences and productivity that are equal to other literary academic pursuits. Digital Cameras, Camera Phones, Scanners, Pictures from internet, Laptop and Apps like Sketchbook and Ibis paint box, were used in creating this studio painting. The exploratory method was used. This involves the pre- production stage in which gathering and snapping of pictures and collecting relevant data - Transferring of pictures through the memory card into my personal computer. While the production stage involved creating sketches in a selective manner of additive and subtractive process and using digital medium to do the finishing. The last stage was the framing for presentation and the analysis of the works painted. Proper study of methods, techniques and materials further strengthen the durability and compatibility of the different materials used.

Work Processes

Stage 1; Preliminary miniature sketches with pencils or charcoal reflecting the themes from which realized thoughts were ascertained
Stage 2; several colour thoughts were made, from where one was chosen for the final colour work. Stage 3; Finished works, colour thoughts were made carried out which gave an insight into the final painting done in this project. With these preliminary sketches and the colour thoughts the finish work now commenced.



Plate 1: Preliminary sketches and colour thoughts



Before
Plate 2: Preliminary colour sketch



After

Plate 3&4 Ovu landscape

Artist: Gilbert Atsegbaghan, Title: Ovu (Landscape), Medium: Mixed Media,
Dimension; 41 cm by 51cm, Date: 2023, Location: Delta State University,
Abraka

Plate 3&4; *Ovu Landscape*; is a painting of a landscape in Ovu town. Is the road that leads to Professor Ese Odokuma Aboderin recreation centre. I happened to be there one beautiful morning, when I saw the children going to school in the early hours of the day, the tranquil environment was broken by the footsteps of the children .who were walking and running to school to avoid the punishment that usually accompanies lateness to school. The serenity of the environment was accentuated by the varying shades of green contrasting with the brownish road that snakes off into the horizon. I used pastel, oil paints, synthetic paint and tiny markers to create the wild grass on the foreground.



Before



After

Plate 5&6: Evangelism

Artist: Atsegbaghan Gilbert; Title : Evangelism; Medium: Mixed Media;
Dimension, 41 cm x 51 cm, Date: 2023. Location; Delta State University,
Abraka



Plate 7: Childhood Dream

Artist: Atsegbaghan Gilbert, Title : My Childhood Dream, Medium: Mixed Media, Dimension: 41cm x51cm, Date: 2023, Location: Delta State University, Abraka

Plate 7: It's reminiscence of the days we spent here swimming and screaming on top of our voices. When we were much younger our parents told us stories of how mermaids use to sit by the bank of this little river that flows into the River Niger and when they see humans coming they quietly fade into the river .Once we were all swimming and shouting on top of our voice, all of a sudden the whirlwind came and swept my cousin off his feet and when he finally fell to the ground, he lost his hearing to this day .There was also another mysterious incident that took place at the very spot where the little girl is doing her washing; a man was called to come and fall a coconut tree because it has become the abode of Bats and a Coven, we were all watching while he was cutting the coconut tree and as soon as the tree fell to the ground the man fell and died. This creek is not just a recreation stream for children; adults also come here to bath. At the entrance of the river there is a stature of an old man seated on a wooden platform with a cowboy hat on his head - the same hat that was worn by 'Oyen', who was a warrior and the founder of the community. Every new year day the masquerade (Epi) will go round the community people who have come from far and near in a ritualistic manner, the masquerade is usually beautifully dressed,with expensive drapery, it will go round the crowd, gathered in one spot, three times before it was rowed with a canoe to go and drop the plantains and other farm produce which the people had put together in front of the statue called, (Baba Ode).

As soon as the boat goes off to meet Baba Ode with the harvest to ask for protection and blessing in the new year for his children, everyone, both young and old, who may be having one form of affliction or the other will jump into

the cold harmmatna water, many are said to have been healed during this ritualistic exercise. As soon as the people see the masquerade and his entourage coming back from the meeting with (Baba Ode,) everyone will come out of the water, and the masquerade will chase them and dispatch them while running back to his shrine. The river is important to the community spiritually, economically and socially. Economically is a source of making a living through fishing and smuggling activities, socially it is a recreational spot for the community people and spiritually it is believed to be where spiritual blessings flow into the community. On this day the weather was bright and the memory came rushing through my brain and the idea was born with my phone camera. Water color and pastel were used to add colors to the scene to create a painterly mixed media painting.



Plate 8: All Eyes on the Judiciary

Artist; Atsegbaghan Gilbert Title: All Eyes on the Judiciary, Medium: Mixed Media

Dimension: 41cm x 51cm, Date; 2023, Location; Delta State University, Abraka

Plate 8: Is a political commentary, in a landscape format. After the last election there was a lot of noise about rigging of the election, especially the presidential election which did not meet the expectation of many Nigerians. Many of us were tired of seeing recycled politicians and we desperately wanted a change, the common man, were the ones who were mostly disappointed. Many saw it as a rape of democracy and were hoping to get justice at the election tribunal, but that was also a dream I would say will that will never come to pass. And the last hope was the Supreme Court; where truth and fairness was supposed to be the order of the day and what we were hearing then was “*all eyes on the judiciary*” as Nigerians waited for the courts to deliver judgment, which never came through. The eyes represent the masses, the symbol of justice represent the law that is blind, but can see in Nigeria, with some persons living

above the law. The green white green of the Nigeria flag flying in pieces, signifying the present chaotic state of our country Nigeria. The moody grey colour symbolizes the gloomy state of the country and the dirty browns represent the dirty dusty bloody roads that are filled with the blood of innocent Nigerians who are dying daily in the hands of bandits and bad roads. Pastel and synthetic ink were used to create the chaotic impression in the work.

Conclusion

Humans live in a digital age where it has become almost absolutely necessary to think and create artworks digitally. There has been a significant shift in the mediums of art from analogue to digital art, and consequently brought about the movement of art production from the traditional support of easel painting to the virtual studio. The exploration of photography and studio painting techniques has been made possible creatively through the virtual studio. Photographs and colour can easily be creatively manipulated once they have been imputed into the digital media Apps, such as, Sketchbook and Ibid paint box. The outcome of this exploration will contribute immensely to the already laid down knowledge and practice of contemporary art practice in Nigeria. It will also serve as a means of harnessing hitherto uncharted paths in the practice of studio art globally.

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