



ANALYSIS OF OSIBOYE OLUWASEUN OPEYEMI COW SKULL ARTWORKS; THE BEAUTY OF MAYANKA 2, GRAZING AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract

Osiboye Oluwaseun is a sculptor and sculpture material researcher who finds joy exploring materials in

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sculpture production. This is deeply evident in his exploration. He has explored different materials like Bones; Camel and Cow, Tiles; Broken and Used, Grog, Granite Stones, Metal Scraps and of

recent Wood Ash. The aim of the study is an attempt to make an analysis of the artist cow skull artworks, thus generating more documents for the artist, artworks and the medium bone. The works are identified and selected from his exhibition catalogue titled "Dry Bones Shall Rise Again, Exploration of Bones as a Medium of Expression" dated January 20-24, 2020. They sculptural artworks are; The Beauty of Mayanka 2, Grazing and Cultural

INTRODUCTION

Material research challenges artists like (Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi) to explore the essence of new media in creating works that excel in form, sensibility and vision. He has explored different materials like Bones; Camel and Cow, Tiles; Broken and Used, Grog, Granite Stones, Metal Scraps and Wood Ash. This study chooses to analyse his bone sculptural artworks that reflects animal skull, to be precise cow skull that was observed in Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi recent art exhibition titled "Dry Bones Shall Rise Again, Exploration of Bones as a Medium of Expression in Sculpture" dated January 20-24, 2020, at University of Benin, Fine and Applied Arts department, Sculpture studio (Ekewan campus). According to Eweka in the catalogue Osiboye (2020), "The exhibition projects confidently ten sculptured bone media artworks made from abandoned bones of Cow and Camel collected from Kano Abattoir Market Mayanka Kano". He also mentioned that,

Heritage. The objectives made a comparative analysis between the three carved cow skull artworks, using observation and descriptive method of data analysis. It was therefore recommended that other animal skulls should be explored as an artwork based on the unique inherent qualities observed in the carved cow skull. It is also believed that this paper will serve as a source of references to scholars and a source of inspiration to other artist and art critics.

“The ten art works were produced within the premise of five objectives. The objectives are; Achieving the treatment of bones to eliminate decay as a result of putrefaction thus making them ready for the production of sculptural artwork; Subjecting bones to physical change by the application of scientific recycling methods; Conceptualizing visual images with bones in order to reveal its inherent qualities and unveil its visual appeal; Production of mixed media art works using bones and other medium such as wood, wood ash, metal, colour (acrylic), grog etcetera;

Mohammad in Osiboye (2020) introduced the artist as, “The dual (sculptor-Art historian) and also indicated that, “The artist has demonstrated some potential of magnitude in his work, trying to create a niche for himself with a technique of his own”.

In a personal communication with the artist, it was informed that the materials (camel and cow bones) are not totally free because they serve other purpose in the society. For instance some people are there to retrieve the bones and use it as bone meal for animal nutrient and some use it as fertilizers, thereby improving plant animal and nutrient. As a result of this little rivalry, negotiable amounts are been paid for the bones or to the casual labourers that helps in scavenging the bones. Also after some exploration in the studio, the artist began to deduce interest in the full camel and cow skull exploration which cannot be found in whole during scavenging unless in scraps, parts or bits. The artist seemed not to have any choice than to purchase the full cow heads at the market in other to claim the entire skull along with the jaw bones and two or three thoracic that are next to the cow skull. This gives the artist full rights on the head, thus suggesting the processing steps that is, the method of eliminating the flesh without tapering with the bone (cow skull).

Sculpture

According to Hannelore (2013), “Sculpture is the art of forming representations of objects in the round or in relief.” Describing what sculpture is, Nwanoro (2016) expressed that Sculpture is one of the oldest art forms. Visual arts has different branches but sculpture is the branch that presents art works in three dimensions and has long existed as landmark, monument, architectural embellishment, cultural symbol, and independent aesthetic object. These various age long representation of sculpture serves as the bedrock for the more recent modifications of sculpture which has not only protected the environment but has developed tourism as well. In times past, one could categorically say artists have a finite number of materials to work with but not anymore. Of late, the imagination and creativity of the artist determines the medium of expression. Muhammad in Osiboye 2022 also mentioned that, “The bulk of Osiboye Oluwaseun’s sculptural works are creatively done using Camel and Cow bones (which ordinarily majority of the society see as unwanted) brought to light hours of trials, days, weeks and months of frustration and moments of pure joy”.

According to Akintonde & Kalilu (2013), other than providing aesthetic appeal, artworks have other functions such as telling stories and preserving cultural and historical narratives. To this end, artists work with a generally accepted formula so that their works will serve the purpose it

was meant to serve. This formula entails the form, style, the technique, the theme of the artwork and the medium of expression, as these are the elements that create the aesthetic appeal and several other functions. It is in this view that the study decides to make an historical analyses and documentation there by studying the form, style, technique and theme. The study adopted survey, observation and descriptive method of analysis. The study also considered three (3) artworks having cow skull out of the ten bone artworks that were produced from camel and cow bones. They are The Beauty of Mayanka 2, Grazing and Cultural Heritage.

Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi

Osiboye, Oluwaseun Opeyemi was born in Ososa, Ogun State. His late parents were from Ogun State, Nigeria. Osiboye was enrolled at Adeola Odutola Elementary School, Ijebu-Ode from 1987 to 1989 and Mayflower Junior School, Ikenne from 1990 to 1992 for his primary education, and Mayflower Secondary School, Ikenne from 1993 to 1997, Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, Ijebu-Ode from 1998 to 2000, all in Ogun State. He is a graduate of Sculpture from Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo with B.A. ED. Fine and Applied Arts. Osiboye had his second degree in M. A. Art History in Fine Arts in 2016 at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and presently a postgraduate student at Department of Fine and Applied Arts University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. He had his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at Kano State Polytechnic, Kano between 2006 and 2007. He taught briefly on a part-time basis at Federal College of Education, Kano from 2007 to 2008. Osiboye later joined the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Federal College of Education (Technical) Bichi, Kano state in 2008 as one of the pioneering lecturers where he is an Art Lecturer till date and has served as the acting Head of Department (2015 - 2018). He has to his credit, publications in reputable journals and has equally attended conferences. He has participated in four joint exhibitions and one solo exhibition. In the field of Art, he is strongly being mentored by Dr. Muhammad Aliyu of department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State and Prof. Efemena Ononeme of Fine and Applied Arts department, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. He is a presidential nominee member of the Governing Council of Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny Island, Rivers State. Osiboye is happily married to Mojisola and blessed with two children, Dunamis and Dominion.

Contemporary Medium in Sculpture

Material technology has gone a long way in art and its range of potentials provides ample research interest. The uniqueness of art based on the peculiarities of the materials deployed in its expressions has clearly created a veritable space for its lasting impression and impact on the collective consciousness of the society. Ogene in Egiolamhen (2019) posited that “material research latently challenges the artist to explore the essence of new media in creating works that excel in form, sensibility and vision”. In contemporary times, medium in Sculpture varies and dwell more on the creativity and explorative nature of the sculptor/artist in general. To be précised Adeyemo and Duniya (2016), defined contemporary sculpture as an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects, and could be in the round (free standing), in relief on surfaces, or in environments ranging from tableaus to contexts that envelope the spectator. They pushed further to isolate and explain contemporary medium in sculpture sighting examples as “including clay, stone, metal, glass, wood, and randomly found objects.”

Ononeme (2010), states that, “there are abundant expressive materials in our environment looking for the attention of artists to use them”. He also defined the source of the medium by saying that, some of these potential artistic media were divinely located through the providence of God in their natural habitat while others have been used by man for various purposes and later abandoned thereby constituting nuisance in the environment. Probably it was in this same state that the bones were recovered from, in order to recycle them into functional sculptural pieces.

Cultural Heritage



Plate 1: Cultural Heritage
Medium: Flat metal bar, Camel and Cow bones
Size: 3ft by 4ft
Location: Post Graduate Sculpture studio, Fine and Applied Arts Dept. University of Benin. Ekenwaun Campus.
Date: 2020

Cultural heritage is part of the treasures Africa cared for right from time immemorial. In modern-day technology, values have been modified to cultural heritage such as city walls and gates to be among the tourists' attraction sites, especially in northern Nigeria. The artist had researched on "A Survey of Styles and Functions of Kano Ancient City Wall and Gates" (Osiboye 2016) during his training as an art historian, which may have been the source of his inspiration for this artwork Cultural heritage. It is a typical representation of Hausa/Fulani architectural heritage associated with the traditional political leadership. They were used to illustrate a typical traditional northern Nigerian kind of landscape whereby the local architectural buildings suggests a distorted triangular structure. These buildings suggest a stylized frontal view of a horse and the horse has been observed to be a social symbol of royalty in the Hausa/Fulani political tradition. The tip of the triangular stylized architectural building shows two small triangular shapes that could be implied as the ear of the horse, while the windows would suggest the eyes of the horse, and the central door can be assumed as the mouth of the horse. The traditional architectural buildings were illustrated in perspective and more than ten buildings with the same symbols of power and strength can be counted. This high relief artwork is a product of flat metal bars with engraved camel and cow bones framed with a fabricated metal frame size of 3ft by 4ft, pertinated with black matte paint. The above artwork is practically an exploration of two neutral colours which are black and white.

The Beauty of Mayanka Kano 2



Plate 2: The Beauty of Mayanka Kano
Size: 94cm by 124cm
Medium: Coloured Ash Paste (CAPT), Bones, Metals, Grog, and Cow horn
Location: Post Graduate Sculpture studio, Fine and Applied Arts Dept, University of Benin, Ekewaun Campus.
Date: 2020.

Mayanka is an abattoir market in Kano state Nigeria, whose peak hours of activities falls within the early hours of the morning (6:00am-10:00am) has a tendency to be unsightly because of the following reasons: different kinds of metallic cutting instrument such as knife, axe, adze and cutlass of different shapes and sizes, the presence and smell of blood almost everywhere on the floor, drainage system, the active workers in the market who are generally identified by the sharp objects that is always in their hand or close to them at every point in time, the sight and smell of urine and feces removed from the animals' intestine piled up over time and the piled up bones, hoofs and horns. The pulling and dragging of life animals such as camel and cow here and there, before tying them to be slaughtered portrays to types of struggle. Struggle for life on the part of the animals and struggle for livelihood on the part of human beings. All of these will definitely make anyone not accustomed to the sight uncomfortable, creating fear. All the aforementioned definitely renders the theme "The Beauty of Mayanka Kano" as an irony when compared to what is actually happening in the abattoir market. Yet in the real sense of it, the beauty can only be appreciated and accepted outside the abattoir. The beauty and positive values of the market can

be outlined in a number of ways. Money is being exchanged for the animals and services rendered in the market, while profit and satisfaction are established, the meat is cooked in homes and public places such as restaurants for consumption as food for body nutrients, the animal waste is being used as manure on crops, vegetables and flowers in the farms and gardens, or used as bio-gas, the blood and bones are being changed to blood meal and bone meal respectively to improve animal nutrition as well.

Colour

Colours appear around the cow skull and on the cow skull as well. The colours that appears on the background of the engraved cow skull are produced out of wood ash, which is been referred to as Coloured Ash Paste (**CAPT**). They appear in shapes such as "L" shape, rectangle and square shape, stitched together to create one shape and a unique background for the engraved cow skull, therefore suggesting a market with different activities and sections. On the cow skull, different colours were identified in the form of small squares still suggesting the multiple activities that is been rendered in the abattoir market. This helped to create contrast at the same time harmony on the assembled engraved cow skull against the background that also appeared in shapes. The Coloured Ash Paste (**CAPT**) has a unique nature to be cool and subtle, even sharp colours are rendered cool and subtle.

Bone

The work is made up of a full cow skull, teeth of camel and cow, carved bone rings and aesthetically carved flat bones; they are bones from camel and cow. The treated bones were given aesthetic value through carving, engraving of lines and holes which were carefully drilled on some parts of the bones and the cow skull inclusive. They were carefully arranged in a rectangular shape on the board, while engraved and sliced cow horns were placed like pillars as if to guide the cow skull, which imply social classification, a common phenomenon in the societal political leadership. This can be described as deterrent to political leadership because it does not give easy access of the people to the government of the day, they can be likened as the cabals. It makes the political leaders not have a first-hand access of the view and plight of the people they are meant to serve.

Political Grazing



Plate 4: Political Grazing
Medium: Cow and Camel Bones and Metals

Size: 4ft by 8ft
Location: Post Graduate Sculpture studio, Fine and Applied Arts
Dept, University of Benin. Ekewaun Campus.
Date: 2018

In contrast to the earlier analyzed art works, this work of art is mainly made up of bone rings, cow skull and cow horn is an exploration of the two neutral (colours black and white). The four feet by eight feet piece of artwork titled Grazing presently in the Sculpture studio of Fine and Applied Arts Department, University of Benin (Ekewaun Campus) was brought to light through the manipulative exploration of the principle of contrast.

The composition of the artwork brings forth a central figure (Cow Skull) with two big horns fastened to it with binding wire; the central form is a clinically treated cow skull engraved upon with lines and holes on the skull. Attached to the two horns in the middle of its length is a chain made of bone rings and metals rings, to add beauty and elegance to skull. The central figure is a form that suggests the pride of leadership or the joy of being a shepherd.

At the background are some other stylized flat cow heads that were depicted faintly, they are made with flat nucleated bone rings. This suggests a socio political classification as well in modern societies in which the life of the political leaders is better than that of the people they were meant to serve or that vote them into power. The background of the work above is largely dominated with treated bone rings that were carefully cut and pasted on the board depicting a rich vegetative environment that is suitable for herd of cow to feed. This could be inferred as the abundant natural resources of the society that has not been tap into or managed properly by the societal leaders, probably as a result of corruption, nepotism, tribalism, mismanagement and misappropriation.

Unique Features of Cow Skull in an Artwork

- **Natural Values:** The cow skull have natural and unique intricate holes (inlet and outlet), forms, shapes that could be aesthetic enough even without the embellishment of the artist. The natural forms are asymmetric designs that are naturally embedded in the skull which always suggests balance and rhythm in the forms of the skull. So therefore, an artist needs to create little or no effect at all on the skull. It could be said that the skull possess its own enhancement features.
- **Forms and Structure:** The cow skull in terms of structure and forms, there are unique features ranging from the shape and structure of the skull, jaw, eyes and nose sockets and other inlet and outlet in the skull. It is observed that the cow skull is triangular in shape and form due to the presence of the horn. Thus this wide triangular shape of cow skull suggests elegance and an elaborate headgear, which will always take the central attention whenever it is used in an artwork production.
- **Mixed media:** The cow skull was also employed in a mixed media process. It was observed during the analysis of the artwork (The Beauty of Mayanka) that despite the use of the cow skull, other medium were observed to embellish and compliment the cow skull in other to bring out the intended creative value of the artist. Also in the composition of the "Cultural Heritage" various media were used to bring the artwork to limelight. The media are metal bar, metal scraps, bolt and nuts.
- **Painting:** It was observed that cow skull surfaces can be painted upon using acrylic paint, without fear or panic, in other to create an additional method of embellishment on the skull's surface. The application of paint, acrylic paint to be precise was observed on "The Beauty of Mayanka".
- **Elegance:** Elegance is perceived in the cow skull due to the presence of the horn part of the skull, thus giving it a wider coverage on board. It gives the artist more surface and structure.

- Techniques used in Moulding: During the production processes, the following techniques were adopted for production of artworks and were used to embellish the skull to achieve the desire of the artist. The techniques are slicing, engraving, drilling, sand papering, carving, assemblage and painting.

Conclusion

The study was able to identify, select and analyse Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi cow skull artworks. The artworks were identified and selected from his exhibition catalogue titled "Dry Bones Shall Rise Again, Exploration of Bone as a Medium of Expression in Sculpture". In reference to the catalogue ten sculptural works were displayed during the exhibition, while three sculptural works were identified and selected for the purpose of the study. They were actually sculptural artworks that reflect cow skull.

It was also documented in the study as well the mixed media exploration, which gave birth to the combination of bones (skull) with other medium of expression in sculpture and painting. Media such as acrylic colours, ash, metal rod, , metal scrap and grog were all explored.

Recommendation

The recommendations in this study include the following:

1. The bone carver has successfully treated cow skull against bacterial infection and other viral diseases for safety and easy exploration in the sculpture studio. It is therefore recommended that other animal skulls should be explored and documented as well. Also having been able to explore cow skulls to produce two and three dimensional works of art, the researcher therefore, recommends the exploration of other animal's skull for studio exploration and documentation as well.
2. Considering the values, importance and state of recycling generally and specifically in sculpture, recycling in Fine Arts should be considered as a major course or section on its own with a full syllabus.

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