Re-materialization of Granite Rocks as a medium of Expression in Sculpture

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Abstract

The studio practice based research aimed to de nature granite stone through re-materialisation in other to establish re-materialisation as a technique in art and also to establish stone dust as a medium of expression in art. This was done by using a studio experimental research design methodology, thus stating the steps involved in the process. The study therefore made a pictorial representation and descriptive analyses of some of the expressions made in the studio. The study therefore recommended re-materialisation of object and forms in Art, most especially in an economic recessed country.

Keywords: Granite-stones and Re-materialisation

Introduction

Expressions have been made on or out of stones and other forms that are in like manner of stones, such as cave, rock, mountain, have been in existence over time. It could be said to have started right from the pre historic period, the period of the early human to the present. According to Appiah (2004), “Pre historic refers to cave paintings and engravings as well as three dimensional objects like weapons ceramics, sculpture and body adornments made from stones, wood, bones and ivory which served the early human in his quest for food, clothing shelter”. He further stated that, “some of these prehistoric art, dated back over 20,000 BC”. This research is hinged on Muhammad’s (2014), statements who states that, “the idea to beautify the environment has a long standing history. It dates back to the early humans who embellished walls of their caves with drawings, paintings and engravings”. Till date stones are been utilized in various capacities to achieve intentions. Stone which is the focus of the study or the medium of expression to be explore (embellished and assemble), appears in our domestic home/ contemporary periods as cooking, grinding, washing and construction objects.
Fig. 1: Grinding Stone: retrieved from, https://blog.motherlandsfinest.com. April 7, 2016.

In fig. 1 above it shows the form of stone been used as a traditional grinding objects. A flat piece of stone is been placed on stand still, and the item to be grinded will be placed on it. Then a smaller piece of stone was used to hit or roll on the item to be grinded against the curve piece of stone on stand still. It is assumed that when stew ingredients (tomato and pepper) are been grinded on it, it is softer, smoother and tastes tantalizing than other form of modern day grinding methods.

Fig. 2: Body Washing Stone. Photograph by the Author

This unique stone (fig. 2) is used to wash some parts of the body, particularly the sole of the feet, due to uneven surface texture of the stone. It keeps the sole of the feet clear and soft. It is observed that as the nature, texture and colour of stones differs, their functions and purpose to humans differs equally. For instance, there is an edible stone which are cooked along with vegetables such as okro (Hibiscus esculentus) and Long-fruited (Corchorous Olitorius Family Tiliaceae), for the purpose of healing some ailments.


This stone (fig.3) which is an alkaline salt with the chemical name “sodium sesquicarbonate” is popularly called Akanwu. According to African Nutrition and Fitness (2012), “Akanwu originates from a rock, it is unfortunately quite hard to say precisely what Akanwu is as little
or no research effort can be found on much of African “products”, and generalizations are typically made rather than serious research”.

In traditional Nigerian arts too, there are soft stones called soap stones used for carving three dimensional artworks. According to Adeppegba (1995), “Igbomina area where the Esie stone images are found and other North eastern Yoruba land such as Ekiti and Yagba areas are attractive”. He further stresses that, “they are over eight hundred in number, and so far, the most published stone, sculpture in Nigeria. Similar soapstones can be found in abundance at Ikom area in Cross River state. Gbaniyi (2015) “This object has played an important role in the ritual of successive generations of members of local communities. They may represent the spirit of the deceased ancestor. It is also possible that they were created as memorials to important figure”. The soapstone plays an imperative value to the inhabitants of the area.

Fig.4: Soapstones Images of Esie.
Retrieved from, nationalmirror.net. April 9, 2016

Falade (2013) confirms that,

“Esie is Igbomina Yoruba town in Kwara State. It is about 48 kilometres South- East of Ilorin and 128 north of Ife. Esie is internationally known as a home of 800 soapstone figures. The stones, mostly of which are in different stages of decapitation, have one origin: it is unknown. What is, however, known is that their etymology is etched deep in myths and myths and mystery?”

In a related study Appiah (2004) also made it known that, “soapstone figures called Nomoli have traditionally been used in Sierria Leone by Menda farmer or Sherbros are powers to protect their rice farms”. Thus the stone figure serves security function among the Mende speaking community. He further reveals that, “similar stone sculptures have also been used by the kissi ethnic group of Guinea. It is a unique type of stone due to is softness and smoothness, thus making easy to carve and manipulate. Great exploration have also been made on stones and other forms that are in like manner such as cave and rock, in the act of painting (the vocal point of study) has dully been recorded.

According to De La Croix and Tansey (7th Edition Art through the Ages),

“The first example of cave art was discovered by amateurs and by accident – in 1879 near Santander in northern Spain. Marelino de Sautuda, a local resident interested in the antiquity of man, was
exploring the Altamira cave on his estate in which he held already found specimens of flint and carved bone. With him was his little daughter. Since the ceiling of the debris-filled cavern was only a few inches above the father’s head, it was the child who first able to discern from her lower vantage point, the shadowy form of pointed best on the cave roof. De sautvolta as the first modern man to explore this cave and he was certain that this paintings dated back to prehistoric times.

It is in view of all this background knowledge that the researcher decides to carry out a carry a re-materialisation effect on granite rocks and using it as medium of expression in Fine Art

**Statement of the Problem**

It appears that the act of stone painting for embellishment purpose have been historically overlooked compared to the volume of scholarship given to traditional work of Art. It is in that sense that the research seek to bring to limelight a better understanding of this kind of art form for possible appreciation and patronage.

**Justification of the Study**

The act of stone painting has been attached to the traditional period with little or no deliberate practice in the contemporary period. The research therefore aims to carry a re-materialization of Granite rock.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to carry out a re-materilisation effect on granite stones. While the objectives are:

1. Producing or transfer of colours to granite stone dust
2. Descriptive analyses of art works produced from granite stone dust in relation to the themes forms and colour

**Literature Review**

This section contains the review of related literatures.

The review is divided in to sub-headings as follows

1. Re-materialisation
2. A cursory survey of stone painting in the pre-historic
3. Style

**Re-materialisation**

Re-materialisation sounds like recycling or looks to be synonymous to recycling, but according to Dew (2017), “Artists, designers and craft makers are currently exploring new materials and process such as Accumulated Printing within their practice to bring forth new forms and extend ideas. Often this is through a hybrid dialogic process of maker’s thoughts translated into code in the virtual world for production in the real world”. While recycling is observe, According to the United State of Environment Protecting Agency (US EPA) (2014), recycling is the process of collecting and processing material that would otherwise be thrown away as thrash and training them into new products.
A Cursory Survey of Stone Painting in the Pre-historic

Many of the modern day human activities could by traced back of the historical period. Right from the basic necessities of life such food, clothing, shelter; all could be traced to the pre-historic period. Then it will a surprise if the act of painting could not be traced to the historical period. In Appiah (2004) “Altamira in Northern Spain as early as 1878 was the first example of cave art that was discovered.


He further stated that, “the cave art comprises engravings, paintings and relief of animals now extinct, as well as schematic geometric feigners some of which cannot be identified with certainty, due to their extreme abstract nature”. De La Croix and Tansey (7th Edition Art through the Ages) expatiate and testified to the above saying,

“The first example of cave art was discovered by amateurs and by ancient in 1879 near Santander in northern Spain. Marcelino de Sautuola, a local resident interested in the antiquity of man, was exploring the Altamira caves on his estate, in which he had already found specimens of flint and caved bone. With his was his little daughter since the ceiling of the debris-filed cavern was only a few inches above the father’s head, it was the child who was first able to discern, from her lower vantage point, & the shcolowy forms of pained beasts on the cave roof. De Sautuola was the first modern man to explore this cave and he was certain that these paintings dated back to prehistoric times”.

In Africa it was reported by Appiah (2004) “the Sahara has the largest number of cave art especially in the Tassii Mountains of Southern Algeria where oneS can see representation of elephants, giraffes, buffaloes and Rhinoceros”. He also made mention in particular that, “there are rock paintings depicting heads of domesticated animals and horses. Pulling chariots which mean that there are (chede) communication between the Sahara and the Arab 1,200 to 500 BC”; He went further to say, “many rock paintings have been discovered in Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Lake Victoria region which have lasted for about 2000 years. Most of these paintings were full of geometric or schematic designs”. In Nigeria as well, stone painting in the pre-historic era is not obscure. Egonwa highlight that, “In Nigeria one over hanging rock at Beji in Bauchi state has paintings suspected to be of pre-historic era on it. Adepegba (1995) expatiate further that, “the first site to be discovered is that of Birnin
Kudu, a village between Kano and Bauchi. The painted rock shelter there was first discovered by a touring administrative officer in 1954 and a close study of the painting was published by Benaral Fagg in 1955”

In summary it could be said that the expressions on the rocks helps in the documentation of the activities around the period and the particular area where the paintings are such that the dressing of humans was reflected on the wall; the kind of animals being hunted for were observed; the method of hunting and the hunting instruments were reflected on. Also from paintings the level of technology then, could be measured. Appiah (2004) said, “There are rock paintings depicting herds of domesticated animals and horses pulling chariots.

**Review on Styles**

The much evidences of stone, painting observed during the pre-historic period, through the various review of literature, it could be traced that the researcher wants to carry out a cyclic evolution of art styles. According to Egonwa (1994) “cyclic evolution is a process by which styles already forgotten some generations ago re-surface and exist side by side with one that is a production of linear evolution”. (Through will be done through re-materialisation). He defines styles as, “the manner in which a work of art is organized by which a manifest constancy of formal properties is observable”. He further stressed that, “styles is responsible for the distinctiveness of one formal expression from another styles in artworks can exist in at least four distinct level, these are person, group, regional and period styles”. Among the four distinct level, the style that will be adopted in the course of the study is the personal style, which Egonwa (1994) refers to as the hand writing of an artist. It is peculiar to a particular artist; it can undergo changes during the course of an artist’s career. It can also become a rallying point for the development of a group or school styles. Chukwuezi (2006) says that, “art schools and art movements evolve and are fuelled by forces of societal dialectics which involves various dynamics within the society. He emphasized further by saying, “the art schools and movements are seen as a social force a kind of movement as the word dialects suggests. It is in view of the above that Mu’azu (2008) suggested experimental painting for the research.

“their styles adapted are both unconventional methods of painting using less brush strokes for either the starting of their painting or finishing, looking at their individual expressionistic qualities, one can therefore say that, Gani (in his life time)and Mu’azu are simply
experimentalist that are able to develop individually, the liquidized pouring and splashing techniques respectively”

In view of the above, the researcher decides to apply different techniques and combination of techniques.

Methodology
The study adopted a design and procedure, which lead the researcher to obtain sources of data for the study. Awotunde, Ugodulunwa and Ozoji (1997), said “A research design is a plan that guides the researcher in structuring the collection, analysis and interpretation of data” Adetoro (1997) also made mention that, “it is appropriate for a researcher to examine the technique and procedures used in previous studies to gain control of a research”. In view of the above, to gain control of this study “Using Ceramic Waste as a Medium of Expression: Broken Bricks” which was a studio practice based research, the study adopted studio experiment and survey method. Rafal (2015) says that “Studio experiment is used to build and publish your experiments”. De Freitas (2002) made mention that, “Practice-based research in art and design refers to those research projects in which creative practice plays the most important role in the cluster of the research methods used. It is also referred to as practice-led research and is usually initiated by the artist or designer”. In view of the above the following procedures was adopted for the studio experiment:

Stage 1: When the granite stones have gotten to the studio, it was washed properly to remove all forms of dirt.
Stage 2: The stones were broken and grinded into stone dust.
Stage 3: The stone dust was sieved in other achieve a smaller particle that is a fine texture
Stage 4: The stone dust was washed with tina and left to dry, before mixing glossy paint then mixed thoroughly together. The gloss paint that was mixed was based on my desired colour.
Stage 5: The coloured gravel stone dust was mixed with top bond, giving an impression of paste. This paste gave room for easy control of shapes and forms while making expression on the surfaces.

The research also used the survey method. According to Mohammed (2004), “survey research concerns itself with the present and attempts to determine the current status of the phenomena under investigation”. This was strengthened further by Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2004), who adds that “survey research is often conducted for the purpose of achieving any or all of the following objectives: description, explanation and exploration. It helped in the analyses of the works of art produced.

Sources of Data
Awotunde et al (1997), define data as, “facts, observation or information relating to a particular activity of study. Observation for this research was sourced from primary sources. They were the existing granite rocks at the following quarry site: Dan Zabuwa kano, Sauna in Kano and Zaria in Kaduna opposite Air force base and. Adetoro (1997) confirms that, “a primary source includes relics, documents, etcetera, which have direct physical relationship. They involve actual eye witness or participant, in an event or the participation of an ancient or recent historical object.
Data Collection
Observational method of data collection was used. Lere, Dadughun and Bulus (2002) refer to it as “the primary tool of scientific enquiry and its value is greatest if it serves the formulated research purpose.” At the site of the quarry the researcher was able to observe the forms, shapes, patterns on the granite and decide if it will serve the purpose or not.

Population of the Study/Method of Data Collection
Population in research, according to Awotunde et al (1997) is “the target group which a researcher is interested in studying and from which he/she intends to obtain information and draws conclusion.” Going by the above, the population of the study was granite stones. In selecting the population for the study, the researcher made use of purposive sampling method. “It is also called judgmental sampling. Judgmental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher attempts to select a sample that appears to him as being a representation of the population defined by his research problem.” Awotunde et al (1997). Tongco in Samuila (2014) also informs that, “it is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants” it is in view of this that different shapes and forms of granite stones will be retrieved based on the intention of the researcher.

Method of data analysis
Art works that was produced were discussed using the descriptive method of data analysis. The method of data analysis ensured that both the art work and the themes will be used for a comprehensive description and interpretation. This helped in analysing the Art expressions: painting, styles, forms and theme of the art work.

Research tool
Research tools and materials were:
  i.  Grinding machine
  ii.  Drilling machine
  iii.  Fabric gloves
  iv.  Metal vice
  v.  Arc Welding machine
  vi.  Granite stones of different seizes and forms
  viii.  Metal scraps and Rods
  ix.  Top Bond
  x.  Gloss paints
  xi.  Tacking nails
  xii.  Stone crusher

Data Analyses
The research produce over five artworks both two dimensional works art and three dimensional. Just two out of the work produced will be analyses below, they are Root and Fallen Icons of Art.
Root

Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi
Title: Root
Medium: Metal and Coloured Granite Stone dust on Board
Size: 4ft by 4ft
Photograph by Author

It is a mixed media art work made from Metal, paper, Antiquity & Granite Stone Screening on Board. Money is a means of exchange that is buying and selling which holds a vital position in Nigeria’s economy. The earliest form of business was trade-by-barter, later on, the use of cowry shells took over as currency. From the birth of Nigeria to date, the currency has undergone series of changes. The early currencies were largely in metal coins, gradually, paper currency appeared and were used interchangeably. At present, the paper currency is largely used with few villages that still use the coins.
Falling Icons in Art

Modern art in Nigeria has come a long way. The founding fathers of modern art in Nigeria such as Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan, Ben Enwonwu, executed art works that challenged the western supremacy both in style, technique and material manipulation, which made them heroes in art. These artists incorporated western materials in telling African stories in their art works. The advent of art schools in Nigeria gave birth to more artists who gave their lives to training of other artists. One such schools is Zaria Art School. In the last five years, great artists from various art schools in Nigeria that have died as heroes of art include; Onachukwu... Fine Arts Department, A.B.U. Zaria, Dr. Kefas Danjuma. Department of Fine Arts, A.B.U. Zaria, Dr. Makama, Industrial Design Dept Kano State Polytechnic., Miss Folorusho, Fine & Applied Art Department. Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Mrs Elizabeth Olouwu, Prolific Bronze Caster, Benin, Akinribola Festus Ayoola, Ondo, Ondo state.

The painting, “Falling Heroes in Art” is a tribute to these artists. It depicts stylized figures in a manner that show them ascending to heaven. The deliberate distortion of perspective in positioning of figures is characterised by hues of colours, which overlap each other. Separation of figures with the viewers is carefully done with chains to indicate a demarcation between the living and the death.

Conclusion

The study was able to establish re-materialisation of granite stone in art as medium of expression and it therefore encourages other researchers to carry same on other objects. In an economic recessed country, re-materialisation could be one of the possible solutions. According to Investopedia (2017), “A recession is a significant decline in activity across the economy, lasting longer than a few months. It is visible in industrial production, employment, real income and wholesale-retail trade”. Re-materialisation of indigenous materials reduces expenditure but creates more products and income. Also apart from re-materialisation that deals with the changing of the primary nature of an object, recycling process is another that should be encourage too because it actual help in reducing pollution.

References


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