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NIGERIAN SKOKIAN ART: A MICROANALYSIS OF THE REALISTIC VISUAL EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ART

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
1999

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ODITA'S MAP OF KNOWLEDGE - 360°
THE SECRETS OF ITS MOST EFFECTIVE USE IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN ART - THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
THEORY AND PRACTICE BASED ON AFROCENTRIC PERCEPTION

Odita's Map of Knowledge 360°
ABSTRACT

Of the Four principal Theories of Contemporary African/Nigerian art put forward by Professor E. Okechukwu Odita, 1966, namely; Bintu (or Survivalist) art style, Kuntu or (Traditionalist) art style, Skokian (or Realistic) art style and Awo or (Contemporist) art style, and their twelve ideal characteristics, the least studied, most misunderstood, and nearly denigrated style is the Skokian style, that appears to me to be the most important. Skokian art style, which has never been favored as a topic for intense research, is considered somewhat simplistic by most modern artists. The formalist critics and lovers of modern art see it as limited in its potential, deficient in its aesthetic value, and monotonous to the point of boredom. It is then projected that the Skokian art style is easily predictable. Many modern artists say this because it manifests as an honest and faithful, almost photographic, copy of the original. However, this study has shown that that is not all Skokian art style is. In fact, Skokian art also interprets nature, and does not just attempt to copy it.

Despite the negative impressions, the fact still remains. Skokian (or Realistic) art style is a staircase that led art into the realm of intuition. In haste, most modern artists have not explored the intrinsic quality of this multifaceted style; they overlook its overwhelming influence upon other succeeding styles.
Its power to make the difference between beautiful art, and a durable one is unrecognized, or just simplified to the point of evaporation. This study has considered Skokian as a style all by itself. It has established its importance to all serious artists intent on producing durable art; realistic or abstract. And, it has tested its twelve ideal characteristics, the first of its kind, as put forward by Professor Odita, against the chosen works of selected Nigerian Skokian style artists, leading to the convergence of western European realistic technique and Nigerian/African subject matter, as an international aesthetic vocabulary.

This work strongly recommends a new approach for the study of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art, as undertaken in this dissertation. It is hoped that, if this approach is favored, scholars would arrive at conclusions that are not just open-ended inferences. By this means, a defensible way of studying contemporary Nigerian Skokian art would be attained.
Dedicated to my wife, Constance,
my Mother Suzanna,
to the memories of my Father
Chief Samuel Igboabuchukwu Anonyuo
(Onyejebi 1 of Ihiala),
my Mother-In-Law
Eudora Tamunoipirinye Wilcox-Orumble
and to the special memory
of my brother and friend,
Anthony Azuka Anonyuo (Tony Hendrix)

to all lovers of Art, the Way, the Truth and the Life
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is impossible to mention all the people who have, in big or 'small' ways, financially, materially and spiritually, contributed to the successful completion of my Doctoral program at The Ohio State University. My father's favorite saying to us makes this task even more difficult. "No man is your friend; No man is your enemy; Everyone is your teacher." This statement is true whether the individual's contributions were positive, negative, or neither. Everybody that I met before and during the research leading to the successful production of this document imparted into me something of quality. Therefore, to those that I met and talked with even in a hurry, I am grateful.

To all my classroom teachers: Mr. Robinson Egbuche, my first art teacher at the Washington Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha; the late Daniel Ozoigbo, Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts at the College of Technology (now IMT) Enugu; Professor Uche Okeke, former Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria Nsukka, now Founder and Director of his Asele Nimo, Gallery and Museum; Dr. Ola Oloidi, my undergraduate art history teacher; Dr. Meki Nzewi, one of the most significant mentors that I had in theater; Uriel Paul-Worika, former Director of the Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture, Port Harcourt; Dr. Isaac Mowoe,
Former Head of the Department of African and African-American Studies, former Director of the Institute of African Studies and former associate Dean of Humanities, The Ohio State University; Professor Anthony Melnikas, my Renaissance and Manuscript Illustration teacher; Dr. Myroslava Ciszkewycz, who taught me Modern and Russian art, and a former member of my dissertation Committee; Dr. Barbara Haegar, who gave me significant assistance; Professor Richardson, my Renaissance teacher; Dr. Manning Marable, former Head of Black Studies, O.S.U; Dr. Sue Jewel, my instructor, Black Community and Welfare; Dr. Okey Onyejekwe, who taught me US Foreign Policy; Dr. James 'Jim' Upton, who gave me my first serious introduction to research methods. To all of you I am grateful.

My special gratitude to Professor E.Okechukwu Odita, my Advisor and teacher and mentor, who read, reread, viewed and reviewed my materials as I added new facts. Thank you Prof. for the countless counseling and advisory sessions. To Professor Ted McDaniel, who refused to quit on me even when there appeared to be a serious 'exodus' from my camp, and who encouraged me throughout my academic pursuit at Ohio State University, I am indebted. Professor William Nelson Jr. is remembered not just as a member of my dissertation committee, but as an angel of mercy. You joined my team at the most crucial point in my work, when the project seemed to have stalled. To my friend and 'brother' Dr. John 'Jack' Rouzer, who not only read my manuscripts, but who, with his wife provided shelter for me during my research tours, I give my heartfelt thanks.
The selfless services of the energetic Janet Stanley, now the Chief Librarian African Arts Library, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., is appreciated. So, is the cooperation of Dr. Dike, Director of the Nigerian Museum of Art, and his staff.

I thank the Coordinator of my research efforts in Nigeria, a contemporary, friend and brother, Nsikak Essien. His resilience in the face of many difficulties contributed immensely to the completion of this work. I also recognize, and appreciate the individual contributions of my other Nigeria representatives, namely: Ernest Anonyuo, my senior brother, who was my Liaison with the Museum staff; Tobias Ndubisi Madu, of the School of Post-Graduate Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and Mavis Madu, who ran my Lagos area. Thanks to you all.

Some special people who came into my life many years ago in very mysterious ways were to play roles that are better called Christlike. They prayed consistently, encouraged in word and letter writing, provided material assistance and largely financed my physical existence from 1996 to present. In this category, one man, a friend, Christian brother Siamak Shahbadoghi and his wife, stand head and shoulders above others of equal significance. Brother Ramin and Beth Yadzani Isfahani are remembered as towering testimony to the faith in the power of Jesus Christ. Pastor Robert Van Horn and the First Seventh Day Baptist Church of Columbus (our home Church) chipped in their widow’s mite, so did my friend, Pastor Gonzales and the Frostburg Church of the Nazarene. Pastor Collin Johnson and his wife, Evangelist Gail reached out.
My gratitude goes to my friend Chaplain Joe Henriques, and to the only man at Frostburg State University who believed that I was the best thing that had happened to practical art history instruction, my friend and "Jack of all arts and master of all' Paul Stimers.

How can you say thanks to your parents? What language would suffice? What emotion should prevail? What thoughts and memories should be left out? Briefly I owe all that I have become to both of you, Samuel and Suzanna.

How can one pay back all the attention, challenges and encouragement that one received from his ten brothers and sisters? Thank you for everything. Let me recognize my sister, Felicia's role in my trip to the USA. It was an unprecedented sacrifice and act of love.

If anyone assimilated my stress, pressure and tension in the chase of this laurel, it was Constance, Mienye Orumbie, my wife of 24 years, and the mother of my three sons, Emeka Tonye Jr., Onyekachi Bara, Chidiomimi Boma and one daughter, Ifechi Anona. It is impossible to conjure up moments that tested everything we believed in, lived and hoped for, without shedding a tear. In the face of all trials and tribulation, persecution and affliction, her hold and trust in an unfailing God grew tighter. On her knees she spent her early mornings and late evenings. I will remain ever indebted to Constance and for the many tests on parenting that my children consciously and unconsciously designed for me.

Thank you Promise and Oby Oduah for shelter, and for those
sumptuous meals; Dubi Austin Nwaenyi for your widow's mite, my daughter
Ifechi Nini Anona, for your constant supervision of my welfare, at all times, but
especially during the period that I worked on this document. I love you baby.

Finally, I give glory, worship, honor, adoration and exalt the name of my
God. He, through His faithfulness, love, mercy and grace kept His Word as I
walked through frightening places, labyrinths of terror, and valleys of death. He
blessed the enemies' curses and made blessings out of them for me. I thank
you, O Lord, my God, and to you be all honor and glory in Jesus Christ, the
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FIELD OF STUDY

History of Art:
Contemporary African art/Africa art & Archeology
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and The Need For This Dissertation

The need for intensified research in contemporary Nigerian art in general, but especially the Skokian art style, has never been more urgent than now. This is because the growth and importance of this art style has out-paced its documentation by the students/scholars interested in contemporary African/Nigerian art. This unfulfilled necessity has consequently created a chasm between the Skokian art style and Skokian artists on the one hand, and their contemporaries in the world of art. It has also deprived the clients and potential patrons and sponsors of Skokian art the opportunity to keep abreast with the goings-on in that area. However, the most telling impact of this disservice to the Skokian art style is the wrong signals being sent as to its importance, thereby projecting Skokian art as inferior to other Contemporary African art styles.

The acute dearth, or total absence of literature on the subject of Skokian art presents a challenge to students and scholars with interests in art history and art theory. Therefore, it is obvious that beyond the need for more
literature on Nigerian art in general is the urgent need for immediate study of Skokian (or Realistic) art style, which is the main cornerstone in the construction of the great edifice now called contemporary African/Nigerian art. It is unfortunate that except for inferences or references made to its contemporaries in Western Europe, Nigeria Skokian art style has not received the attention commensurate with its strategic importance in the development and growth of African/Nigerian contemporary art.

It is, therefore, this need that this study is going to address by presenting the Skokian art style in such a way that even a new comer to the style and its many unexploited potentials will immediately understand that its importance is not being prodded up. The study will attempt to make the style speak for itself, by pitching the theory and its 12 ideal characteristics against the chosen works of a cross-section of Nigerian Skokian artists, and other artists, who are not Skokian artists in the main, but have done works in the style.

Zoning

For the purpose of this study, the Federal Republic of Nigeria was divided into five primary zones (figure 1.1, Map of Nigeria, showing the distribution of Artists). However, not all the zones were covered as the political unrest in the country made data collection from certain parts of the nation a very risky and even unnecessary venture. The persistent political and economic situation in Nigeria between 1993 and 1995 necessitated a drastic
change in the initial methodology. All the works analyzed, and discussed in this dissertation, were collected from; the Western, Eastern, Mid-Western and the Riverine areas of Nigeria. The Northern part of Nigeria is significantly represented by the works of an artist; Chudi Igboanugo, a product of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. His paintings testify to his understanding of the culture of the predominantly Hausa/Fulani–Moslem North.

Historical Background

The birth, development and growth of contemporary Nigerian art can be concisely discussed under the following headings;

1) Transitional: From the traditional to the Contemporary
2) Onabolism 1922-1958; The years between and after
3) Zarianism, 1959-1961; The years between and after
4) Quest for the History of African art, 1966-Present; The years before and between.

It is not the objective, nor the intention of this historical background to trace, step by step, the progression of Nigerian contemporary art from its cradle to the present. However, it will attempt to briskly look at landmark events and some key personalities who contributed to the development, growth, and the dissemination of the traditional and contemporary arts of Nigeria, at home, and abroad.

It is important to know that the events and individuals presented here
are by no means the only contributors to their areas of the arts. The events and individuals presented, cannot be objectively discussed, without the mention of the many significant, and insignificant others; men and women who were instrumental to the founding, and the development of Contemporary Nigerian art. The roles of a great number of artists, art historians and connoisseurs in guiding art in the right direction, cannot be minimized. They were both visible and vocal at all the different levels of it's manifestation and growth. Events and personalities discussed here have been ‘favored’, because they deal very significantly and directly with the theme of this study. Their philosophies, theories, and practices, in many ways, contributed to the nucleus of this dissertation. For example, Skokian art style, which is a convergence of the African/Nigerian subject matter/motif, with the western European realistic art technique is a hybrid. At the formative period, this hybrid which could be called a loose form of Skokian could have been represented by the following artistic formula: Onabolism + Zarianism = Peripheral Skokian art style.(as seen shortly).

However, at the second stage of it's development, and through the research of Professor Odita, the Skokian art style; Theory and practice; (Principles and Characteristics), is succinctly represented by the succeeding formula; Nigerian/African Subject Matter + Western European Realistic Art Technique = Convergent Art (Skokian Art Style). However, unlike the Constant in this dissertation which is Convergent art, the elements that contribute to the
peripheral 'Skokian art style, are synthesized in such a way that they cannot be visually separated. This is not the case with convergent art because, the contributing elements can be visually told apart.

Onabolism

Onabolism as a term has been used by Dr. Ola Oloidi of the University of Nigeria Nsukka in his presentations in scholarly conferences, to represent the period that the notable pioneer of Nigerian realistic art worked, and within which his paintings influenced many Nigerian artists.

Chief Aina Onabolu was born in 1882 to Christian parents. He began his art career in 1900 and within a short period of time, his paintings called attention to the artist who had excelled in portraiture and landscape painting. In 1920, Onabolu resigned his employment as a clerical staff, and decided to pursue painting full time. His first exhibition which was held in Lagos few months after his resignation, drew applause and positive reaction from critics and ordinary art-watchers. In June of the same year, 1920, the artist traveled to Britain to study Fine art. He also studied in Julian Academy in France---receiving a certificate of proficiency for oil painting.

It should be remembered that before the Zaria Art revolution (discussed below), which had far reaching influence on art, Chief Aina Onabolu had visited the United Kingdom in the early 1920s, studied fine art, and therefore became the first Nigerian to embrace totally, the Western ideology of realistic art. As Oyelola (1976) observed:

Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) as the great pioneer of Nigerian painting
believed in the importance of technique which should be acquired by ‘severe academic training and intellectual visual effort. In 1920, he went to England to study whatever he could of the European sciences of painting (p88).

Aina Onabolu’s successes facilitated the invitation of Kenneth Murray and others to help establish western European realistic art style in Nigeria. The two men differed very distinctly in their ideologies. As Murray was attracted to the traditional culture of the different Nigerian ethnic groups, Onabolu was consumed by his newly acquired knowledge of western European realistic art. Murray, possibly at the height of their misunderstanding, went to Umuahia to teach fine art. Some of his more famous students include, but not limited to Ibeto and Enwonwu. Either way, the seeds sown by the two art teachers germinated and bore fruit yielding talented artists such as the late Professor Ben Enwonwu, the late Akinola Lasekan, and especially, leading to the emergence of art institutions. Among these schools was the College of Arts and Technology Zaria, which according to Mount, is the second art school to be established in English speaking West Africa, which became Nigeria’s leading conventional art school.

It can be said on one hand, that Aina Onabolu set the initial stage for the development of Nigerian realistic art style, that the Zaria School wrote the script, and that the Nigerian artists are the actors. This is a process that Ola Oloidi, 1998 aptly presents as, “From Onabolism to Zarianism” in an article titled, “From Onabolism to Zarianism: Zaria Revolt as Terminal and Initial in Modern Nigerian Art” (National Symposium on Nigerian Art, p8
Some Nigerians who benefited from the efforts and successes of Onabolu and Murray; example; Akinola Lasekan, and Ben Enwonwu will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3 where their Skokian works will be analyzed.

Zarianism

Understanding the significance of the Zaria School in the development of contemporary Nigerian art, and, therefore, the strengthening of Skokian art is important to this research. Without the Zaria School, there would not have been a justifiable Skokian art style as there is today, with its many interpretations and manifestations. Although these interpretations and manifestations are varied, they operate within the confines of the theory of Skokian art, guided by its principles, and evaluated by its 12 Ideal characteristics. The revolution at the Zaria School in the late 1950s, gave the realistic artists the impetus to widen their definition of reality, i.e., beyond the scope established by the Western European art philosophy. The Nigerian Skokian artist was then able to consciously integrate the Western technique into his Nigerian theme/subject matter, without losing touch with his predominantly Nigerian art audience, and a few Western ones. Considering therefore this significant importance, this chapter will look at the place of the Zaria school in the growth and establishment of more Afrocentric, culturally based Nigerian Skokian art style.

Zaria School's leading role in contemporary Nigerian art cannot be seriously questioned. Their landmark revolution set the stage for the
development of more freedom of artistic expression for the Nigerian artists, and this includes Skokian artists. The core demand of the students, which is liberty to blend traditional cultures of Nigeria with the Western European realistic art technique, was echoed in the recommendation of the Colloquium during the Second World and Black Africa Festival of Arts in Lagos, 1977. The Colloquium recommended that:

In view of the fact that art is a factor of cultural identity and technological progress in a civilization, and in view of the fact that a work of art is African not only by subjective content, but essentially so by its form and style that carry the unmistakable stamp of Black and African aesthetics, the Colloquium recommends that the artists acquire knowledge of this aesthetic and create along this same style, while avoiding mere copy and repetition of the past. On such a foundation, they would be free to get innovative inspirations from other aesthetic sources in the world and make effective use of all the means of modern technology available to them (Amoda Moyiba.1977).

Within the same concept, 'synthesis' (as in the blending of Nigerian tradition with the western European realistic art technique) is found in the personal philosophies and practice of the students of the Zaria School. The identical philosophies also resonate in the works of the students that they teach, or have taught. With the students of the Zaria School, there was no overstating, or compromising the importance of a conscious blend of the traditional Nigerian subject matter and the Western European technique. For them, during that period, it appeared that nothing else mattered, except that it had to do with the concretization and advancement of the newly installed philosophy. For example Uche Okeke, in his letter of 17th April, 1961 to the
then Governor General of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, communicated his anxiety to see the new College of Fine Arts being proposed for Nsukka to be "set on a firm basis." He suggested that:

Someone who understands the present trends of events in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world should be allowed to direct the course. I do not wish the college to live in isolation, to be out of touch with reality. I think we should be saved such violent cultural revolution that overtook Mexico sometime in this century . . . I believe that it is only through the acceptance of the concept of "natural" synthesis that the conflict of contemporary African mind must be resolved. I am fully convinced that with effective leadership, the new school will lead the way in fostering the healthy growth of modern African art culture (Okeke, 1961, Nsukka, Nigeria).

In his response of 20th April, 1961, Dr. Azikiwe among other things, said, "We are determined that our artists should be firmly rooted in Nigeria's society, so as to avoid the mistakes of other nations." The sensitivity of both men towards the need of founding Nigerian art firmly on the culture of the people is transparent. Both men referred to the mistakes of other nations, and dreaded having to deal with that in Nigeria.

Yusuf Grillo, another product of the Zaria school and one of the pillars of contemporary Nigerian art, while responding to a question about the influences of the twentieth century Western painting in his work, said that:

The contemporary Nigerian artist must accept those influences which are vital to him. It does not matter whether these are drawn from Yoruba sculpture or Picasso paintings, both of which incidentally I find exciting. The artist should not worry about the results of these borrowings because the work, if sincere, cannot help but be a Nigerian work since it is created by a Nigerian" (Mount 1971, p203).

Professor E. Okechukwu Odita, who was the Secretary of the Zaria Arts Society at the time of the Zaria School's historical, ground-breaking, and
barrier-lifting protest, has since championed the theoretical aspect of the results of that event. Odita, seemingly dissatisfied with the pace of and the response of the African/Nigerian art to the stimulus of Western art and culture, has embarked on a literary crusade, to stem the tide. The cumulative result of Professor Odita's extensive study, within the continental, and Diasporan Africa, is the four Theories of Contemporary African Art; Bintu, Kuntu, Skokian and Awo, of which one, the Skokian style is the topic of this study. He has since published extensively in furtherance of the goals of a project that he was party to birthing: the Zarian Revolution. Odita has also established what could be called one of the most complete, and better coordinated African Art history programs/Curricula, at the Ohio State University's, Department of History of art. His painting titled, Looking Out from the Inside (fig.3.22,pg.223), captures, and represents the call, and the need to look at, and to see the world from within African culture. This way, it is hoped, that the African will survive the allurements of the cultures of the world that are very different, and even destructive and incompatible with the Africans'.

The Skokian art style seem to be amplifying the same need, with some consideration for a cautious admittance of some of the foreign cultures, in a way that they converge with African cultures, but not synthesize or unify with it.

It is clear then that the call for national or cultural consciousness in the performance of artistic activities through the conscious blending of European realistic art technique with the African/Nigerian traditional mode of artistic
expression was first intuitively expressed by The Zaria Art Society of the late 1950s in the Nigerian College of Arts Science and Technology Zaria. It should be noted that with the new definition for Nigerian art, in general, Skokian art moved slightly away from the mundane or simplistic adherence to Western European aesthetic expectations, and introduced a dynamism which was ignited by the new consciousness.

Considering the above facts concerning the Zaria School and the renaissance of the traditional essences in the Skokian style, some students and scholars have audibly credited the Zaria Art Society, of the later 1950s in Nigeria, with a great artistic revolution, and as being the flag bearers of the new artistic heritage. This revolution did not just bridge the gap between the extreme artistic traditions in Europe and Africa, but it granted the artist the liberty to explore the artistic universe. The Skokian artist was therefore enabled to look at nature from within and through his own culture. It can now be said, without fear of contradiction, that this 'great awakening' opened the eyes of the hitherto groping Nigerian artist, once bonded slavishly to the Western European artistic tradition. *Adam and Eve* (fig. 3.22), 1965, under the new consciousness, were presented as Africans by Uche Okeke, and this was several years after the historic event at Zaria. This painting, in another way, testifies to the claim of this study, that Skokian art was also a beneficiary of the artistic revolution. It is important to note that Uche Okeke, who epitomizes the struggle, who actually coined the term, “Natural Synthesis”, did not abandon
the Skokian style of expression. This established fact puts a lid on the argument in some quarters, to the effect that, what was realized after the revolution was purely ‘modern art’ as in abstract presentation. The Nigerian artist appreciated the new European artistic expression, but did not lose his originality in the process of utilizing it. One can confidently say that The Zaria Art Society initiative, sometimes called a revolution (never a rebellion as some detractors, and other ignorant members of the public call them), was not an exercise in futility. Its fruit, synthesis, somewhat laid the foundation for, and ensured a significant degree of Nigerianess in the works of the contemporary Nigerian Skokian artist.

At the second level of contemporary art development in Nigeria, it was the Zaria ‘revolutionaries’ that set the stage, and the artists who wrote the scripts for the several unorthodox forms of artistic expression that were to engulf the Nigerian art scene for over 40 years. The energetic experimentation and astute leadership of the ex-Zaria School (classes of 59-61), of many art schools and organizations in Nigeria has created sufficient cultural awareness and established an enviable consciousness for Negritude and its application to the fine and applied arts. Mount (1971) agrees that the following Zaria School graduates; Grillo, Akolo, Simon Okeke, Onobrakpeya, C. Uche Okeke and Nwoko are now the art establishment of Nigeria. Their vast and positive influences are far-reaching among college trained art graduates in Nigeria. For example, as the Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts at the
University of Nigeria Nsukka, C. Uche Okeke diligently sowed the seed, 'synthesis', which over a period of time grew into full-fledged search and research into the heart of the Igbo culture, discovering its essences and deploying them in his creative enterprises and those of his students. However, it should be noted that the revolutionaries went away after graduation and furthered the concept of “synthesis” to the best of their individual understanding, and levels of creativity.

It has been sufficiently established that the greatest factor in this new sweeping consciousness that changed the face, complexion, and direction of contemporary Nigerian art, was the Zaria School. It had caused the artist to seek and discover the more acceptable blend or “synthesis” of the old art—the traditional Nigerian and the Western European—to realize the new Skokian art style, which has become dynamic and multifaceted. It is a new form of Nigerian Skokian artistic expression realized through a convergence of the Nigerian theme and the western European realistic art technique. The Skokian artist, fully conscious of the diversity open to him, and the uniqueness of each style, has tapped even into the Oriental motifs. He uses the symbols in his visual commentary, as he has always used Nsibidi (fig. 1.4) page,, and Uli signs and decorative motifs.

The forces that contributed to the development of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art; now immensely diversified, were attractive, irresistible, and irrepresible. The fear of being left behind in the world that experiences
constant change in science, arts and technology caused the Skokian artist to stake everything to arrive at the new style that is more dynamic. Anything new was different, and anything different was somewhat acceptable to the contemporary Nigerian society. That was a society where a number of men and women were ready to 'mortgage' anything and everything to look western European. With the expansion of his clientele, the Skokian artists' desire and thirst to exploit the new philosophy was insatiable. Convergence has come to stay.

The Quest for the History of African Art: 1966-Present

It is possible that there was some sort of consciousness about the history art before the 1960s, just as there existed a kind of realistic art before Aina Onabolu first took up a pencil to draw. This study appears to establish the year 1966 as the beginning of a more serious academic search and research into the art traditions of Nigeria, with the mind of unearthing a peculiar way of looking, speaking about, and responding to the culture of the people, which is unique and peculiar.

There are many scholars who are presently involved in trying to chart a course for the new Nigerian art history. The list of such art historians is probably long, a laudable growth that has not in a very significant fashion improved the way that Nigerian artists, art historians, and the pedestrian art-watchers behold contemporary Nigerian art in general. This is not arguing that
there have not been flashes, but that the flashes are not forceful enough to

generate the kind of surge in the favor of the arts; in theory, and in practice.

In 1966 a few days before the on-set of the civil strife in Nigeria,

Okechukwu Odita left Nigeria for the United States of America to study at

Indiana University, Bloomington Indiana. He has since graduated, and has

taught art history at the Ohio State University for nearly a quarter of a century.

Odita, as already mentioned, has built a dynamic, and possibly one of the best

African art history programs in the U.S.A.

As an artist and art historian, E. Okechukwu Odita has

consistently exhibited as a painter, and has published extensively

on the theory and practice of both traditional and contemporary

arts of Africa...He is the creator of the first graduate program in

the history of Contemporary African art in the United States of

America...(Odita, Guide to 360o1991,p78)

Odita, who is a full Professor, directs the undergraduate and Graduate

programs in the history of African Art. A brief look at the African art history

courses offered at the University, and taught by Professor Odita will convince

one as to how extensive, and ambitious the program is.

Undergraduate and Graduate level courses available in the

Department of History of Art, of The Ohio State University, with

concentrations in the History of African Art include B.A. as well

as M.A. and Ph.D., Courses designed, developed and taught, in

a cycle of six years...(Odita Guide to 360o,1991)

The courses include the following:

1) History of Art 216 Introduction to African Art and Archeology U5
2) History of Art 505 Contemporary African art: 1920-Present UG5
3) History of Art 610 African Art and Archeology 1, UG5
4) History of Art 611 African Art and Archeology II UG5
5) History of Art 614 Comparative study of African and European art UG5
6) History of Art 615 Contemporary Art of West Africa UG5
7) History of Art 616 Contemporary Art of Central Africa UG5
8) History of Art 617 Contemporary Art of East and Southern Africa UG5
9) History of Art 704 Studies in Africa Art and Archeology UG3-5
10) History of Art 705 Studies in Contemporary African Art UG3-5
11) History of Art 804 Problems in African Art and Archeology G5
12) History of Art 805 Problems in Contemporary African Art G5
13) History of Art 618 Contemporary Art of North Africa G5

The above is a panoramic view of an extensive and indepth program of study in African Art; Traditional and Contemporary. To understand the dynamism and uniqueness of this program, one may need to compare it with the programs in other universities across the United States of America. This dissertation cannot undertake the necessary comparative analysis needed to show the very high quality of the Traditional and Contemporary African art program at The Ohio State University.

However, it can be seen, that the program covers the entire continent of Africa, dealing with not only the sub-Saharan Africa as most universities do, but spanning the entire continent of Africa, and dealing in detail, with all its regions. It is thrilling to behold how contemporary African art can be studied in close conjunction with the traditional African art.

The list of other art historians who have acquired the necessary tools includes but is not limited to, Daniel Babalola, Dele Jegede, Ola Oloida, Chike Aniakor, etc.
Objective of the Study

One of the objectives of this study is to draw the attention of observers and scholars of contemporary Nigerian art to the specifics of the Nigerian Skokian art style. The study will;

1) discuss Skokian principles and practice, as found in the works of a select group of Nigerian artists, and

2) establish the importance of Skokian art style as a vital branch of contemporary Nigerian art as illustrated by figure 1.2, The Metamorphosis of Nigerian Art, from the Traditional styles to the Post-Skokian Styles.

It is important to note that before this present study, no exclusive study has been done on Nigerian Skokian art style. This is possibly the major reason why the Skokian art style is misunderstood, unfortunately, by some Europeans and Nigerian artists, art historians, and a wide range of art lovers. Its marginalization stems from the fact that the art-world is used to a peripheral understanding of realistic art. They constantly look at Nigerian Skokian art through the peephole of western aesthetics; from the Renaissance, and the Classical Greek standards. It is surprising that this mistake has never been an issue of concern to any art historian, even with the danger sign that warns about a potential rupture and collapse of the very base of contemporary Nigerian art.
Considering the above, therefore, one of the specific reasons for this study is to re-discover the contemporary Nigerian Skokian Art. By doing so, this dissertation intends to be part of the answer to the question of why there is the dearth of materials on this subject, which even at this point, necessitates that still more field studies be conducted.

On another level, this work will attempt to:

1) discover true Nigerian Skokian art and all its ramifications,
2) establish its importance in contemporary Nigerian art, and, especially, its potential for bringing art back to people of all academic and social strata.

If the neglect of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art is to be checked and its image restored, then books resulting from serious research and conducted with tested methodologies should begin to proliferate in the college and university bookstores.

This study is not just an image maker for the Skokian style, or a make-over on an expired style. It is a call for a change of attitude toward the style; for more studies, with a mind to objectively fathom its true place in contemporary Nigerian/African art.

It is important to note that the chosen contemporary Nigerian artists are not presented chronologically, geographically or stylistically, or even according to high worth or achievement. The collection is a mixed grill that truly represents the contemporary Nigerian art scene, of those who still work or had
done something in the realistic/Skokian art style.

This study will discover that analyses of Skokian works, or their understanding, will be shallow without a thorough, or at least, some knowledge of the cultural background of the artist or his client.

Considering Artist's Statements in Art Analysis

Taking into account the fact that the writings and statements of artists may sometimes be valid source materials for a study of works of art, this work has critically accommodated commentaries of artists upon their own works or those of others. Adams (1994), agrees that it is important to do this since the artist is solely immersed in the ideas and attitudes of his/her environment. He is also the sole participant in and witness to the act by which the work of art is created. This attention becomes most important in the case of the contemporary Nigerian Skokian artist who has been neglected by almost everyone but himself. According to Adams, quoted above, it is important that the artist gets the opportunity to speak about his art, about the development of his ideas, about his problems, and about his solutions. Jane Kennedy (1993,p.15) agrees also that it is important to quote the artist when possible, "to convey a feeling for the dimensions of their lives and works." Odita (1991) observes that through this, one may find that the contemporary Nigerian Skokian artist is capable of independent thought, that his activities are prone to problem-solving. Contrary to certain kinds of opinions, the Nigerian Skokian
artist is capable of developing ideas into forms and forms into words.

By analyzing works intimately and bearing in mind specific statements of the Nigerian Skokian artists that created them, one will find that sometimes, especially in portraiture, the Skokian artist attempts to, and succeeds in including psychological qualities of the sitter. A Nigerian Skokian portraitist, Obi Ekwenchi, in an interview with this writer in preparation for the artist’s 1988 exhibition of sculptures, described the expectations of some clients thus:

Summons to think like the artists of the pharoahic days (that was before Akhnaton), or be guided and limited by the idealistic inclinations of the Greek and Roman artists ... to see as your mind leads you (sometimes, some one else’s mind). You are constrained to figure out how handsome this weather-beaten grandfather would have been sixty years ago—because, that’s what he just asked you to do—without assisting you with an earlier photograph... (1988 Interview)

Chris Afuba, a versatile artist whose media of artistic expression are diversified states, in an unpublished seminar paper that:

The affluent client sort of sees you, the portraitist as God, capable of including in your figure, qualities that are only sometimes psychological, or even non-existent.

Recently in a CBS Weekly television program, Betty Ford, the wife of a former President of the United States, at the unveiling of a life portrait of her, commented on the painting. Mrs. Ford said that she liked the portrait, but would have preferred that it exhibited more character. By this, she explained that the work should have had age lines and the natural facial undulations common in the aged. Are those lines vivid on the former First Lady? No, but she wished that the artist had represented what was existent only in her mind.
Skokian artists battle with such psychological aspects or characteristics or qualities of their sitters. It appears therefore that other realistic painters/portraitists all over the world share in that experience of the Nigerian Skokian artist

With the above statements in mind, it is the contention of this study, in unequivocal agreement with the opinions held by some theoreticians that we can look to artist's statements for invaluable ideas which are capable of revealing their thought process, therefore helping the researcher, or any inquirer to appreciate the events that have led to their kind of art.

Not all artists sampled were able to articulate fluently their thoughts in words. Sometimes the personal academic achievements of some Nigerian artists as theoreticians may constitute a barrier between their ideas and their works. Another category of artists was also encountered; those who believed that (to borrow an anonymous author's expression), the sources of their art lie in such a personal area of feeling that no words can explain it, or else they feel that what they do is so different from anything that had been done in the past that no thought can express it.

Whatever the artists' thoughts or impressions might be, this study has, by reference to the studies of related nature, tried to penetrate from the literal meanings of ideas, their intrinsic conditions, and their contents. Also, it was discovered, in the course of this study, that it was too early for critics of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art to discard their knowledge and experiences
of traditional Nigerian art. This is because the full understanding and 
enjoyment of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art should obtain from the fact 
that Nigerian Skokian art is an offspring of the latter. In traditional Nigerian art, 
the religious aspect may be both visual (traces of the remnants of sacrificial 
animals, e.g.: blood, hair or feather), and conceptual; while in the 
contemporary art, especially Skokian art, it occupies the realm of 
intuition(Aesthetic Value), and sometimes, manifests in the form of motif used 
in decorations or ornamentation—both in the fine and applied art respectively.

Internal evidence is vital in the understanding and full appreciation of 
the Skokian art style, because in it, lies the iconography, the very core of the 
essence of some contemporary Skokian works.

Thus, the artists who heed the call to the convergence of art (i.e., the 
"blending" of western European realistic art technique and Nigerian/African 
motif/subject matter), produce works of great depth and sophistication. Their 
works feature the characteristics of the cross-cultural values that inspired 
them. In this way, Skokian works could appeal to the Western world without 
incurring the dislike of many Nigerians.

Definition Of Skokian: Interrogating The Term Skokian

Russ Walton, a student in my art history 216 class in 1993, submitted 
for class discussion the following question:

The way that you have used the term Skokian gives one the impression
that it is synonymous with the term, Modern and contemporary. What word is this and which is it?
This question asked by Russ Walton represents the feelings of many students and scholars interested in contemporary African art history. This is because the names that had been in use since the sixties and seventies have not truly represented the form of art practiced among the African/Nigerian artists of the contemporary era. Many scholars, and the interested art viewing public, have groped for an appropriate name that should be given to the hybrid that resulted from the convergence of the African theme and western European technique. Searches led to names (being used in Europe), such as Russ used, 'modern and contemporary', terms applied indiscriminately and interchangeably to designate contemporary African art.

These two block-terms "modern and contemporary", terms that are intrinsically Western, do not convey in any form that African culture contributed to the creation of contemporary African/Nigerian Art. As a matter of fact, the term Modern should not have been used to define the convergence of western European realistic art technique and the African/Nigerian subject matter. The reason is obvious. Modernism and Realistic art are, and have constantly been at loggerhead. The scope of this dissertation does not allow for a thorough explanation of this very vital information.

Forrester Washington (1960) and Evelyn Brown (1965) both used the term 'contemporary' in their works. McEwen (1966) prefers the term 'modern' in his writing. The term "Academic art" has also been used to denote a form of
contemporary African/Nigerian art taught in formal art schools where students are exposed to Western realistic art style, its practices and techniques. It is used sometimes as a synonym for Modern art. This term falls short because, it has been applied to works done by nonacademic persons. In fact, it is used loosely as a synonym for modern and contemporary.

Dele Jegede (1983) in the context of his work felt that it was imperative to justify the application of the term “academic school” to college-trained artists in Nigeria. The term, Jegede affirms, is a convenient catch-all for all artists trained in conventional art schools.

The term, academic, seems comfortable with the mode of application in Jegede's work, because he used it to differentiate between the two major groups of practicing contemporary African/Nigerian artists; College trained, and self taught or apprenticed artists.

Definition Of The Term Skokian

Odita (1966), in his article, "Some Observations on Contemporary African Art", convincingly identified the existence of a schism in contemporary African art, and classified the different schools of thought into three distinct groups: (1) Those who believed that traditional African art holds the only true value; (2) Those who believed that the western art was all that mattered; and (3) Those who believed that to realize an acceptable style the traditional must be blended into the western.
In his article, "Contemporary African Art: Theory of Bintu, Kuntu, Skokian and Awo" (In the Arts (1980)), Odita gave names to, and defined and described the four stylistic groups: as Bintu (or Survivalist) art; Kuntu (or Traditionalist) art; Skokian (or Modernist) art; and Awo or Contemporist art. He then went on to explain and apply these new ideas, and convinced many scholars that what was realized at the initial fertilization of the Western artistic tradition and the African art heritage was Skokian art, and not just plain Modern art. Skokian would from thence mean 'like in the Western style' but with strong and significant African/ Nigerian influence.

It was in 1983 that Odita finally found a name that truly expresses the true origin of the contemporary African/Nigerian art, its thoughts, philosophies and its principles. The Realistic African/Nigerian art, the style that emerged as a result of the convergence of western European realistic art technique and African cultural theme, then becomes Skokian art, making the practitioners, Skokian artists.

Skokian, the term that had been introduced by Jahn Jahnheinz (1958), in his book Muntu, is African. Still, its application was limited to literature and used in an essentially negative sense. In a literary sense, Skokian means something new, the legitimate offspring of African environment and European moral principles. The South African government's aversion to the harmless African beer and the Police regulation that forbade its use, forced the African inhabitants to invent a drink (Skokian) that could be made and stored in small
quantities that were easy to hide and that could be matured in a few hours, and have its alcoholic effect quickly.

Skokian in this study, is used sparingly to designate, in somewhat partial agreement with Odita's definition, an art style that came into existence as a choice between two undesirable alternatives (Odita, 1980). Still, this qualification has been updated in Odita's 1997 publication (also see Website: http://www.cgrg.ohio-state.edu/odita). This art style laid the foundation for the preceding styles on the contemporary African art scene. Chapter Four of this study. It is important to point out that at a certain stage in its development, Skokian art ceased to be a style in dilemma such that the Skokian artist no longer saw himself as an artist at a cross road, seeking to choose from two undesirable alternatives. He has established a recognizable direction that is distinctly different from the two styles that birthed it; African culture and Western European realistic art technique.

It is necessary at this point to familiarize the reader with the characteristics of Skokian or Realistic art style, to enable one to ascertain how truly the works produced by the artists categorized as Skokian artists fit into the Theory and principles or the 12 Ideal characteristics of Skokian art style. Odita (1991) has pointed out that it is vital to recognize two essential values that must be simultaneously engaged. They are:

Artistic and Aesthetic values. The artistic value examines the skill or excellence in execution, involving the organization of elements such as line, shape, mass, color and texture as well as the principles of unity, balance, proportion and rhythm. It, therefore, considers the visual sense of the harmony of a work of art, of the sense of the visually beautiful...it
contains the fundamentals of aesthetic experience such as pure emotion, but excludes intellectuality...In this sense, artistic value deals with the science of form and harmony as well as aesthetic experience (i.e., immediate visual response from a viewer). In contrast, Aesthetic Value estimates the worth (or goodness) of a work of art, and sets a price upon it. It may be based upon special, personal, or cultural considerations. But to estimate and to price are mental rather than visual actions...Aesthetic value to this extent is that which renders a work of art useful...With the artistic and aesthetic values, it is now for the first time possible to determine a high, low or moderate value of any work of art of a serious artist (Odita, 1991, pp. 68-69).

Further, Odita standardized and presented the values as follows:

Artistic Value = Beauty
              = Artistic and Aesthetic experience
Aesthetic Value = Goodness
                 = Aesthetic experience only

Using the provided formula as a guide, it is easy for the student or scholar, or ordinary viewer to ascertain the category or style of an African/Nigerian picture. For example, if the majority of the characteristics of a work is overwhelmingly artistic, the art piece must be primarily Skokian, but if the aesthetic qualities dwarf the artistic, the work would most certainly be the Awo art style. To facilitate better appreciation of the analysis of Skokian works that would follow, the characteristics of Skokian Art and its values are reproduced here (Odita’s Map of Knowledge 360o, 1991, article 23):

Ideal Skokian Art has the following twelve characteristics:

NATURE.........................................................................................................VALUE

1. Theme or motif derived from an African tradition 1. Artistic/ Aesthetic
2. Cross-cultural inspiration crucial as a factor 2. Aesthetic
3. Strong evidence of the use of a posed model (animate or inanimate) showing a formal or 3. Artistic
informal academically trained artist. Informal training consists of the artist copying from models from books, magazines, and photographs.

4. Emphatic linear or aerial perspective  
5. An evidence of good understanding of color theory  
6. Modeling of forms in color or in three dimensionality  
7. Exposure of elements in the composition to one light source with consistent cast shadow  
8. All elements of the composition showing definite setting in the African environment  
9. Human proportions true to life  
10. A manifestation of overlapping of elements in the composition  
11. A strong interest in portraiture, which shows an understanding of the internal structure of things as they appear through external coverings—for example, the accuracy of musculature  
12. Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality

Odita has recently updated Characteristic No. 1 as; Artistic Value to reflect the sameness of the terms; “theme and motif”. However, for the purpose of this study, I would keep close to the original 1991 version of characteristic No. 1.

To understand the usefulness and applicability of the 12 ideal Characteristics of Skokian, an evaluation of their artistic and aesthetic values, is called for. As evident in the table above, there are 11 (artistic values) to 1 (aesthetic value), or 10 (artistic values to 2 aesthetic values). This can be
further calculated as 91.7% Artistic Values to 8.3% Aesthetic Value or 83.3
Artistic Values to 16.7 Aesthetic Values; therefore, in either case, Artistic
values overwhelmingly outweigh the Aesthetic values. The result of the
calculation thereby determines that Skokian is mainly visual, rather than
mental, in approach.

Using the appropriate formula, it can be mathematically determined, as
to the degree of the Skokianess of any given Skokian style art work. This
calculation also helps to place the works within one of the three levels of High
Skokian, Medium Skokian and, Low Skokian. This further classification would
be done in the conclusion of this study, in Chapter 5.

Significance Of The Study

This study is important because it presents an in depth look at
Contemporary Nigerian Skokian art and explains how it has wrestled with the
external influences, successfully merging with this external stimuli, without
allowing itself to be swallowed up or synthesized. Though not always apparent
to the practitioners of the Skokian art style at the beginning, the Skokian art
style had definite principles. When these principles are strictly adhered to, the
Skokian artist is able to establish a brand new aesthetic theory, distinctly
different from either of those that had contributed to its birth.

Because of the intensity and variety discovered in the Skokian art style
in its totality, this work determined that a simple formal analysis would not favor
one of its main objectives, to enlighten where some have failed. The study, therefore, chose *microanalysis* for the purpose of revealing the unexpected dimension of complexity and meaning within the works. This, it is hoped, will broaden our knowledge and appreciation of Skokian art style. On this basis, the analysis can then take a close look at Skokian paintings and sculptures and tell what has been noticed about them, explicitly and implicitly. Stepping into the role of the artist will only act as a means to an end—an end which is to see how the Skokian theory and its 12 characteristics have revealed the execution of the Skokian art works discussed.

Considering the erroneous information that has been disseminated about the contemporary Nigerian artist, especially the Skokian artist, this work will endeavor to:

1. Go beyond the mere identification of individual Skokian art works to determine if the work could be analyzed and given a concrete/durable vocabulary that could be used by the world of art to facilitate the study of contemporary Nigerian Skokian art.

2. Ensure that the analysis done is not simply a formal analysis—cataloguing how the formal elements and principles of a composition interact in works of art. It would go further, to enlighten the viewer about the intrinsic quality of Skokian art style. It is important to do this because, if Skokian works are seen as just artistically pleasing, an observer will miss the subtle and implicit cultural information they convey. In this way, the art world will be
informed about the symbolic meanings in Skokian works where even colors and motifs have predetermined symbolic meanings. One should then bear in mind that, as we examine the basic principles of composition, Skokian artists may sometimes deliberately violate one or more of these organizational principles in order to make a personal statement (Smolucha, 1996, p.99).

3. Establish the enviable place of the Skokian art in the development of Nigerian art styles and point to how Nigerian Skokian art became the bridge between the very distant past, the immediate present, and the very far future.

4. Amplify the significance of this study by carefully considering the thoughts, and discussing the works, and, sometimes, lives of 18 Nigerian Skokian artists in ways that exhibit the artists' sensitivity towards two very powerful stimuli, the one they were born into, Nigerian culture, and the one that was foreign to them, Western European culture through art.

Review Of Literature

Extant literature in quantity and quality of material dealing with Nigerian/African art indicates that scholars have shown more interest in and, therefore, knowledge about traditional African art. The number of scholars involved with the collection or study of contemporary Nigerian/African art is insignificant within the total body of scholars who place the study of African traditions in the center of their scholarly inquiries. Within this group, students of contemporary art constitute a small group. The existing literature in the area of
contemporary Nigerian/African art reveals two distinct classifications; the first is made up of materials that deal with general issues concerning contemporary African art; while the second focuses on the specific topics and problems of “modern” African art.

As a preamble to the Literature review, it would be worthwhile to illustrate the alleged preferential treatment of traditional art by scholars and collectors, by briefly presenting the views of some ‘protesters’ (namely; Posnansky, Delange, and Kennedy)—who speak in favor of Contemporary African art.

Not many writers have dared to plow the contemporary Nigerian art field as much as the scholars interested in traditional Nigerian art did, and are still doing. The reason for this reluctance, or lack of interest, cannot be immediately discerned without initiating another thesis altogether. However, commonsense tells us that since Skokian art is partly western European, westerners would understandably prefer something different. Western European art lovers had had their fill of realistic art to the extent that anything non-Western—traditional African or Oceanic—would be a welcome relief. In the case of Africa, something reflecting the ‘exotic’, ‘primitive’, ‘naive’ or untainted nature was desired and welcome. So, westerners exalted traditional African art to a superior position from which it has not come down.

An article titled, *One Man's Show of a Young Artist*, published by an anonymous author in *The Service*, (date not available), clearly illustrated this
preference. The author writes that,

The contemporary African art which opened today at the National Museum in Wales, is in many ways a surprising one...For there is a little of the primitive, not too much of the barbaric, and the sophistication of Europeanization, is quite pronounced.

One could imagine the anonymous author’s and perhaps other British gallery goers surprise as they walked through the gallery doors, as they must have done several times, expecting to see fearful masks and blood-stained African sacrificial objects. It may have been a form of culture shock as their unrehearsed sensibilities collided with those 'unbarbaric' canvasses. Some must have thought that they were at the wrong show. This is what happens when people who have been conditioned to think stereotypically of someone else' practices come face to face with some realities that are contrary to the held notion. Jacqueline Delange further proves western preference of traditional African art over its contemporary, observing that:

While many inquired into the traditional background (of African art) very few are concerned to look at contemporary artworks much less take them seriously (1966,p.6).

She went on to ask:

Does not a new consciousness of planetary exchange lead us to think that the darkness of Africa has been much more a question of our inability to relate adequately to Africans, than a lack of light on their part (ibid.1966,p.6)?

A recent exhibition of contemporary African art organized by the Studio Museum in Harlem in New York, which is undoubtedly one of the major melting pots of Modern art, (from January 21 - May 6,1990) dramatically illustrates the
neglect suffered by contemporary African / Nigerian art. In her review of this exhibition, Kate Ezra (1990) claimed that one of the Curator's unspoken aims was to make the contemporary art world aware of the importance of the African artists working today and to ask:

Why are they not being shown or collected with the same enthusiasm equal to their inherent value? Why are the works of these artists which are equal in quality to their western compatriots and concerned with the same issues not purchased or shown by major museums and collectors? With all the museums in New York, why is the Harlem alone in presenting this talent to the public? These questions she insisted must be discussed not just by Africanists, but by anyone concerned with contemporary art.

Merrick Posnansky (1992) a founder/member of the Arts Council of African Studies Association, reacting to the fact of the drought of contemporary African art works in the United States, while hailing the exciting and necessary work being done by his colleagues on traditional African arts, frowns at the negligence of the contemporary African artists and strongly affirms:

That as scholars, we have other responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to stimulate contemporary African art. It is remarkable how few major exhibitions of this art have been held in the United States. In the early days of African Arts there were a number of articles on the subject. Now they are rare, crafts, yes, and Folk art, but reviews of the contemporary art scene, or critical evaluations of leading African professional artists appear only infrequently in the learned journals. A few major exhibitions of contemporary African works and more articles on the artists would possibly divert some interest away from collecting increasingly scarce traditional art...why not devote a few major exhibitions to the present state of African art?(p.8)

Ending his enlightening article Posnansky asked;

Isn't it time that we recognized a responsibility to modern and
developing Africa by giving it a few shots in the arm? Why not a few more special exhibitions or articles celebrating the works of our African colleagues as we approach the quarter century mark of independent Africa (ibid. p.8)?

Jane Kennedy 1993 commented unequivocally on the issue of the 'shunning of the contemporary African artists'. She observes that:

Contemporary African artists have faced difficult struggles, especially when confronting prevailing Western misconceptions and prejudices about African and Africa. These stereotypes are farther fostered by pervasive efforts to categorize African art in conformity with Western aesthetic criteria. The reverence accorded (traditional African art) is sometimes construed to suggest that change is a travesty. Such obstacles imply that whatever the direction of the new artists, danger lies ahead. They are criticized both for leaving traditional elements behind or for embracing traditional elements...Clearly this attitude is unnecessarily limiting (p.12-14).

It is a fact that in spite of the preceding illustrations of reluctance of scholars and collectors to deal with contemporary African art, there is no debating the other truth that many writers have made immense contributions to the growth of both traditional and contemporary African arts respectively. Still, the partiality toward traditional African art is rehearsed and evident. Works that contribute to better understanding of contemporary African art are not as many as those that deal with traditional materials. However, what little has been done has produced various conceptions, interpretations and disputes as each School of thought emphasizes and insists on its own particular points of view.

It is pertinent to start this review from the publications of the middle 60s by Forrester Washington and Evelyn Brown and skirt through to the latter
works of Odita and the contributors of the 70s and 80s and the very recent contributions by the 'class of the nineties' like Jean Kennedy, Odita, Seiber, etc. The resume of works done by other students of African/Nigerian art, especially the "modern", is also reproduced out of the compilation by Janet Stanley (1993&1994) titled, *Modern African Art: A Basic Reading List*. It is important to note that most materials written on contemporary Nigerian art are, in the main, parts of a general literature on African art. Scholars usually went for the general since the concept of Africa then and to some extent now, is that of a tiny enclave that is struggling to make some positive impression on the minds of the Westerners. This generalization has constantly kept the study of contemporary Nigerian art in its embryonic stage since not much room is left for elaborate details and discussion. Detailing would have meant going beyond superficial definitions and descriptions. It would have treated issues such as iconography, the best methodology to be adopted in the study of contemporary Nigerian art.

Specifically, this literature review will be treated under, 1) General Literature and 2) Specific Literature.

General Literature

Forrester Washington (1960), one of the harbingers of the new interest in contemporary African art history, in his *Contemporary Artists of Africa*, compiled a bibliography of African artists. He deals with only names and
addresses of the artists. It is important to mention that his work was foundational to the construction of a stronger body of literature on contemporary Nigerian/African art, therefore, of great significance.

Evelyn Brown (1966), the then Assistant Director of the Thurman seems inspired by Washington's initial success. She, more or less, reworked the latter's book, infusing some new information. Her book, *Africa Contemporary Art and Artists* published by the Harmon Foundation in 1966, is definitely an improvement on Washington's, having included and described art schools and organizations. However, Brown's book in spite of a few brilliant flashes, is not deep enough to accommodate artists' works and philosophies, nor analyses of the works. Her book, therefore, serves more as an artists' directory than as an art history textbook. Brown's laudable attempts were recognized by Babalola (1981, p.31) who claims that:

...she has done a good job of documentation, perhaps the first one of its kind. With the realization of how big the African continent is, and the enormity of the problem she attempted, her dilemma ought to be better appreciated. 
...On the whole her recognition that African contemporary art is alive and her effort in identifying contemporary artists, will no doubt serve as an impetus to scholars studying contemporary African art...
The closest that an earlier writer or commentator came to acknowledging the dual existence of Western European and African elements and culture, is found in the book, *Contemporary African Art in South Africa* by
E.J. de Jager (1966). He notes and praises the union of styles and techniques. However, it becomes confusing when de Jager states that despite the artistic contact between both cultures, neither sought to imitate the other, but remained distinctly its own, accepting those elements which were beneficial to its survival." The question here is this; How can a style that remained distinctly its own, not imitating another style, accept those elements which were beneficial to its survivor? This statement is not completely true because earlier contemporary African/Nigerian artists like Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan and Ben Enwonwu did imitate western European realistic art techniques, and succeeded in applying this technique in their works. Their earlier works which marked the true union with foreign technique of realism could be called facsimiles of the original western European realistic art of the Italian Renaissance (15th. Century).

The writings of Jacqueline Delange (1966), Kate Ezra (1990), Merrick Posnansky (1992), and Jean Kennedy (1993), among others are steady reminders that there might be a socio-political, and/or economic undertone in the overwhelming interest of the western Europeans in traditional art and its negligence of contemporary African/Nigerian art. Jacqueline Delange (1966) states quoted above suggests that, the creative artist, like a barometer of the society, gave the first indication of what was happening and wondered why Western intellectuals relatively comfortable when it comes to questions of history, economics and development refused to consider contemporary African art... Could it be that the artists' role as the barometer of the society causes us to realize our own
inadequacies...It is sufficient to notice that most books on African art end abruptly after a presentation of the heads of Ife...all the known examples of "good" African art. As long as we condemn Africa to the past, the numerous exhibitions of traditional art will introduce us to nothing more than a universe of tribal images seasoned in myths, carefully conserved, interpreted and distributed by the Western intellectual. As important and interesting as this may be, it is high time to notice that African art is alive and in movement (p.6).

Delange, also points out that the western Europeans know:

African art through the writings of archeologists and ethnologists who while trying to collect information, to understand it and then to communicate it to the public, have constantly bound up artistic production with social and religious imperatives beyond which it is impossible to imagine a new perspective. The Black African world is imprisoned in our minds by these scholarly studies which in most part, have not bothered about the living projective of the communities they analyze (ibid.p.6).

It is surprising that this comment, made in the sixties, should be repeated in the nineties (Ezra, 1990, Posnansky, 1992 etc.), thirty years later during which time contemporary African art has blossomed and perfected, but is yet to be accepted as an accomplished style by the larger world of art.

The article titled Return to the Origins, McEwen(1966), by sheer power of its destructive potentials, calls for a serious reaction. Though the article was written in 1966, and this response belated, it is the hope of this author that impressions and attitudes that may have been formed as a result of the article's colossal misinformation can still be remedied. Like the saying, better late than never.

In the article, McEwen strongly urges that the new African must attempt to stand on the so-called "pagan art". Blaming the purported corruption of the
once pure African cultures on Europeans, he cries that "...today, Africans lacking traditions are seething with desire for expression demanding outlet." What exactly does McEwen mean by that or by the other claim that one of his chief projects was, "...to promote an art movement in a land where hitherto no local traditional art was known to exist" (p.31).

McEwen tirelessly cites his students at the Workshop School as some worthy examples of "truly African", a term he never really explained. These kinds of inferences and statements made by McEwen leave one wondering if he truly understood the basic theory of cultural evolution. It further makes one suspect his intentions and distrust his reasons for the mission that he undertook in Africa. It is not mentioned anywhere in the author's known works that he encouraged the French, American or German contemporaries of the contemporary African artists to return to their origins. Surely they did have traditional origins. Why is the author weeping over the loss of "African artistic virginity"? Why would he lament Africa's growth in the direction that the whole world's art is growing? McEwen is simply unable to mask his intention, as he spent most of the pages in negative criticism and making open-ended statements that are neither suggestions nor solutions. His redefinition of creativity to mean the production of art in the stern traditional African mode is most disconcerting, as is his claim that the African creative urge had been destroyed, leading to, "the degeneration of the artists' talent from creative expression to mechanical fabrication"(p.32). Certainly there is creativity even in
the mechanical fabrications. McEwen fails in this article to convey a sensitivity to the fact that the Africa of the "dark continent," differed distinctly from the Africa of the late middle 20th century.

It is important to mention briefly McEwen's experiences during the 1966 Dakar festival. McEwen had been invited as a judge to help choose with the other judges which entries had evidence of better creativity and draughtsmanship. McEwen, who had a mindset on African art, believed that some other criteria would be in order, that is, that the works must also show paganistic or ritualistic qualities. Looking for his 19th century expectations in the 20th century African art, McEwen attacks African artists and their works as being cast from the same mold. It is not then surprising that the influential McEwen has his way with the judges who found a work from McEwen's Workshop School in Salisbury, Rhodesia, to be the winner. (This type of weird criteria for judging African art attracted a reaction from Prof. Ben Enwonwu, the most famous of the earlier contemporary Nigerian artists, who said in part that, Europeans are the main culprit, who not only colonized Africa, but made sure before their departure that they brainwashed Africans and established, in positions of leadership, stooges. Enwonwu constantly questioned the credentials of European judges, who frequently sat in judgment over African art.) The decision of the Dakar judges is very questionable, especially if one should look critically at some of the sample works of McEwen's Workshop School. It is very easy to detect that most of the works fall short of fitting into
the "master's" prescription. To McEwen, some examples of good African art would be the landscape painting by Joseph Ndandarika, and Thomas Mukurobgwa's, Where I Used to Go with my Cattle. However, none of those paintings could be categorized as traditional African paintings. McEwen, sounding like the savior of African cultural interests, states also that if the artists are not reclaimed before entering the trade, "his mechanical tasks and mental attitude towards productions are such that he becomes incurably addicted." McEwen failed to realize that occasionally, the traditional and also the contemporary African artist consciously alters his stern adherence to the principles transmitted by religion and the society to create various works in various styles for immediate economic benefit. Such brief departures definitely do not hamper the creativity of the artist. The term addiction cannot be to be applied to an artist whose versatility allows him to move around the entire spectrum of creative activity. McEwen's insensitivity towards the African person is eloquently testified to by his calling those artists who do not fit into his recommended styles uncreative morons, who are more robotic, more mechanical than human.

The teeming contradictions in his article, sometimes embarrassing and disparaging, suggest that the entire work is a promotional gimmick deployed to attract the attention of the unsuspecting African governments. Is it not contradictory that McEwen, who, as judge and jury, condemned Europeans for introducing "dummy" art to unsuspecting Africans, should now advocate, "a
universal art collection and an art library for the study of art from all places and all times”, emphasizing a “concentration upon European and African art”? Now, the question is, what good is the author seeking for art in the phenomenon that he had likened to cancer and accused of staining Africans’ original creativity.

McEwen, without any question, put together some of the flowery terms used in the discussions about African art. Beyond this flowery facade, his intentions seem more manifest in his consistent antagonism toward any development that would seem to suggest a forward thrust by African art. It is this thrust that bridges the gap between contemporary African art and other world art movements of the same period. McEwen failed to reflect any consciousness of the fact that Africa does have a past, which like other peoples’ pasts is the past which is influencing the present and possibly the future. It is suspicious that someone like McEwen who comes from a culture that is fast developing in leaps and bounds should advise someone from another culture who is not even running fast enough, to slow down, and if possible to halt, and stand-put in a dormant state.

Thus, McEwen’s writing is filled with the imagination and inflexible mindset about what African art should be; i.e., "ritualistic and paganistic".

The many inconsistencies contributed to the weakness of the entire material. And this inconsistency is what McEwen struggled with throughout the writing. It does seem that as he tried to side step the truth, he swerved too far
from it. This dishonesty in the representation of history would greatly affect the way a lot of people look at contemporary African art, especially those who are left with few other sources of African art history.

Ulli Beier’s true stance on contemporary African art is sometimes hard to discern. Records show that one time he is praising the efforts of the ‘new artists’ and other times he attempts to bemoan the demise of African art. This claim centers primarily on his book, *Contemporary Art in Africa* (1968), in which he lamented the death of traditional African art and strongly requested other purist lovers of traditional African art do the same. Also of interest to this study are the remarks (quoted below), credited to him by Mount (1973). From the statements that Beier made in those books, irrespective of other positive comments that he may have made concerning Nigerian/African art, it does appear that to him, African art would only be acceptable if it stayed traditional, pure of any external influences. This is very much in agreement with his contemporary and compatriot, McEwen. Again it is hard to pin this perspective on Beier because later in the same chapter he says that, "African artists have refused to be fossilized." By this perhaps, he meant that new trends in world art have manifested in traditional African art, and that the new artists are keeping step with the rest of the world.

Beier’s flip-flopping shows that although Beier had written fairly widely about and made viable contributions to African art, he did not fully support the forward thrust made by Nigerian artists to embrace the avant-garde. He seems
to feel more at home with any artistic expressions that are not academic and intellectual. This view is enhanced by looking closely at the groups of artists that Beier (and his wife Georgina) associated with, and also at some of the recorded statements that he had made. In the book, *African Art Since 1920* (1973), by Marshall Mount, we read that Beier associated with different Mbari movements, especially the one at Ibadan. This relationship lasted for as long as the group was in its formative stages. As soon as the works of the first Zaria graduates, Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko, were exhibited, typical examples of the 'new art', Ulli Beier charted a different trail. This departure was not long after the Oshogbo School of Artists started. Beier, using his connections, advertised the works of the Oshogbo artists to the International communities. The fame of the school in the west, and its subsequent presentation and acceptance as the sample of Nigeria's (Africa's) best contemporary art, had commenced.

Beier's leaning could not be misunderstood as he passed negative comments on any work that did not conform to the 'pure' Oshogbo philosophy. It was exactly this standpoint that led Dele Jegede (1983, p.6) to say that Beier's (1968) work, "lacks balance and unemotional treatment. Its objective and objectivity should be measured in terms of Beier's preference for non-academic art."

Furthermore, commenting on the panel, *Christ Among the Elders*, by Lamidi Fakeye, Beier suggests that the artist was leaning towards an
unidentified stimulus which had lent his work a vague look that was un-Fakeye.

Beier writes:

The door...is a charming work depicting the life of Christ...The basic form employed was Yoruba, but the proportion shows a tendency to become more naturalistic, and the general sense of the form lacks the boldness of a traditional carving. As a result, it could be held that the carving had suffered. It is pleasant, but a little dull and vague. It lacks the big sweep and power of traditional art and loses itself in a lot of detail...(Mount,1973, p.36).

Similarly, in trying to explain the extreme style contrast found in Ben Enwonwu's painting and sculpture, Ulli Beier claims:

As somebody put it, "he(Enwonwu) cannot make up his mind whether he wants to be an African or an European. He wants to be an individual explaining nothing but himself and at the same time, he wants to be a social success...(Mount 1973,p.36).

It was clear that Beier is dissatisfied by Enwonwu's statement that he could switch from one style to the other whence he commented that the switch in styles or what he called:

...variety in styles means more than that. It represents real conflict and a genuine representation of an ambiguous position of the Modern Nigerian artist between two worlds" (p.179 ).

Impartially, Babalola (1983) suggests that Beier's claim that the book was on Africa was bogus, and recommended the title "Contemporary Art in Oshogbo, Nigeria" for it.

On a different level, Marshall Mount (1973) meticulously enumerated the various art schools and their primary foreign influences. Compared with the works done in this area, his could be called a fairly serious work, an attempt at presenting a form of contemporary African art. A closer look reveals that this
book is little more than a detailed exhibition brochure, though the author went further than his predecessors and contemporaries, being a trained Western art historian. In spite of many exaggerations about the strategic importance of his friends, McEwen and Ulli Beier, to the study of African art (Mount, 1973:15), the author succeeds in giving the beginner in contemporary African art a spring board into the contemporary African art field. Sharon Pruitt, in her dissertation (1984), noted, however, that Mount's work was a continuation of Evelyn Brown's work except that Mount offered more details about art institutions and substantial artists' illustrations. He made also a strong effort to discuss the artists' philosophies and techniques of production. Mount's book is, therefore, important in this way.

The unsubstantiated claims and many generalizations in Mount's book are not peculiar. They can be found in a lot of literature where the authors have made many definitions, very few descriptions of works of art, and fewer analyses, or none at all.

Maude Wahlman (1974,p.87) severely criticized Mount's African Art: The Years Since 1920, suggesting that the book is confused—at least in the organization and presentation of data—outdated and with no theoretical base. Wahlman is of the opinion that these serious flaws are apt to make the book dangerous and diminish its value as time progresses. This comment and many others before her may have in part triggered Mount's revised edition of his book. Unfortunately, not much was included in the main text, except that the
introduction received a face-lift.

Mount (1989) attempted to lift his book *African Art: The Years Since 1920*, from an ordinary surface study, to a more serious source of vital and durable information on African art. The result of this effort was captured vividly by Stanley (1993), who said that this reprint of Mount's 1973 text was presented without change "apart from the removal of three color plates that appeared in the original edition. Mount does, however, provide a new six-page introduction to update and correct some of the earlier information". Stanley sees this effort as insufficient if Mount actually wanted to represent the intervening years between 1973 to 1989, years that have seen so many developments and new artists on the modern art scenes in Africa. Stanley then suggested that Mount could not possibly have dealt with the said developments in six pages. Concluding, Stanley added, "this book remains an historical look at the subject."

Generally, work done in the area of contemporary African art to this point, except for Odita (1966), discussed below, is either general or sketchy and sometimes misleading. This is because of the rush-rush methods used which do not allow much time to isolate specific vital issues about contemporary African art and to thoroughly study and analyze them. Another reason for the superficiality could be the wrong methodology used. This submission does not in any way underestimate the impressive works done previously and recently on contemporary African art, but it is suggesting that
most of the information and therefore "facts" known by most students of contemporary African art, especially before the efforts of the scholars of the 1990s, were half-baked, half-truths, or outright misinformation. The lengthy presentations and response to the works of McEwen and Beier respectively were motivated by this writer's fear, shared by Maude Wahlman, that dependence on some literature among the uninformed people desiring to learn about African art will lead to a serious misunderstanding.

One of the most significant sources of information on the different issues about African/Nigerian art, is Janet Stanley's yearly updated Modern African Art: A Basic Reading List. She does not only give the general biographies on the artists, but supplies a fairly impressive resume on the literature of every book or catalogue/brochure included. Her compilations have become a sort of encyclopedia, and especially for information about an artist, an author, or a book.

Specific Literature

The authors who are discussed under specific literature are those who have gone beyond mere definition into the realms of description and analysis of the state of contemporary art in Nigeria/Africa. Some of the most visible include, Professor Odita, Ola Loidi, Dele Jegede, Daniel Babalola, Roy Sieber, Hassan Salah, Susan Vogel, and Jean Kennedy.

Odita in his article (1966) "Some Observations on Contemporary
"African Art," attempts to indicate the existence of a schism in contemporary African art, noticing what is, "in fact a more or less on-going battle between different Schools of contemporary thought" (p.61). He classified them into three predominating schools of thought centering around the main tenets of each:

First, those who maintain that traditional African art holds the true value for the contemporary artist...;

second, those who believe that traditional art is of the past and is inconsequential... that Western trends are paramount in shaping their thoughts and work;

and, finally, third, those who see value in a syncretic blend of the traditional and the modern (p.61).

Ola Oloidi (1978) and Dele Jegede (1983) projected some slightly different classifications that will be discussed in detail in later paragraphs of this chapter.

Ola Oloidi (1978) gave a more sophisticated treatment using the visual arts department of the FESTAC 1977 at Lagos, Nigeria. The works exhibited at the FESTAC 1977 covered the entire spectrum of artistic creativity ever known to the Black man. It was here that the notable art historian, called "one of Nigeria's leading art historians" (Ekpo Udo Udoma) attempted a stylistic classification of contemporary Nigerian art. He could not have chosen a better place for this exercise. He found three distinct groups of artists and classified...
them as follows:

First, The artist symbolist
Second, The artist folklorist, and
Third, The artist Expressionist/Socialist

The symbolists, he said, represent those artists that base their works on traditional themes; while the last group represents the social and political commentator. This group also includes, portraitists and the genre-artists.

Babalola (1981) and Pruitt (1984) both took on two aspects of Odita's relatively new Theories of contemporary African art, Kuntu, the traditionalist style, discussed by Pruitt, and Awo, the Contemporist style, discussed by Babalola. Both works explored the principles of the styles and analyzed several works by chosen Nigerian artists to validate the effectiveness or workability of Odita's theories and their principles. Their efforts, if coordinated with the work of Dr. Odita (1966, 1980 and 1991) that inspired them, will start a new approach to the study and facilitate the understanding of contemporary African art.

Anderson, a research student from San Diego, cherished the information contained in Babalola's work but complained about too many 'foreign' words taken from what he called tribal languages. This writer identifies with his dilemma and proposes as a remedy that a conscious effort be made toward compiling some sort of dictionary of the ethnic languages and pronunciation guides. This would facilitate more effective communication between the researcher and the subject being researched, and would result in
a more fruitful and reliable documentation of facts. Again this is one of the reasons why this present study has called for scholars interested in studies among non-Western peoples to at least have working knowledge of the language of the people and also a basic understanding of their culture. This is the approach taken at most Nigerian Colleges and universities where art students are expected to take at least two years of a foreign language. English is not included since it is the language of instruction in Nigeria.

Dele Jegede (1983), presenting studies in *Trends in Contemporary Nigerian Art*, very skillfully took the reader step by step through the development of the two major trends, the Academic and the experimental or Oshogbo School. Choosing two highly commendable and visible representatives from each group—Bruce Onobrakpeya for the academic, being one of the earliest Zaria graduates, and Twins Seven Seven for the Oshogbo school—Jegede elucidated their profound differences as one would expect but surprisingly, he also found interesting similarities between the two artists' works. He was thrilled to find that, "in spite of differences in cultural and educational backgrounds, these two artists evince certain parallels." He determines these qualities as the two dimensionality of the artists works, "both nuanced by a coloristic scheme entirely personalized". Jegede unequivocally called the two artists "the best examples from their respective schools."

However, one will observe that the study on the trends in Contemporary Nigerian art is not just concerned with two artists, but with the two systems that
birthed and nurtured the artists.

Dele Jegede 1983, bothered especially by the dearth and low quality of literature in contemporary Nigerian art observed that:

The study of contemporary manifestation in African art is undoubtedly a neglected one in academic circles. Africanists lured by the quest for antiquity, and attracted no doubt by the sociological, religious, anthropological and aesthetic aspects of traditional African art have concentrated on its study in a manner which tends to put contemporary African art in jeopardy. In return, essential avenues of propagation and dissemination—academics, publishers, galleries, museums, collectors and dealers—have responded perhaps unwittingly but, without doubt, persistently, by establishing traditional African art...as the only legitimate art that the Africans are capable of producing (p.32).

The neglect of the study of contemporary African art has risen out of the inability of anthropologists to address themselves to contemporary phenomena in African art, as well as the lack of enthusiasm displayed by the art historians. This was the impression of Professor Daniel Crowley (1969) who was quoted by Dele Jegede (1983) commenting on the issue.

As a result of this Jegede (1983:3) added that:

The literature on this topic is not as robust as it should be. Articles have been published in magazines and journals. A good percentage of such work appear to be euphemisms for public relations work...There is a considerable dearth of scholarly books on contemporary African art which is in itself symptomatic of lack of interest by academicians.

People unfamiliar with the goings-on in the contemporary African art scene may not understand why Jegede is so vehement. However, to those who have observed and followed the development of contemporary African art, his frustration is not misplaced. The only difference today is that since
Jegede’s submissions in 1983, contemporary African art has not only seen more literature, but has experienced a dizzying variety of styles and star artists whose works dare the art world to neglect them. Dele Jegede agrees that in the study of Nigerian art, scholars should try to recognize the differences in culture, and even the ways words or names are written and pronounced.

Dele Jegede, in *The Eve* (1984), discusses art schools in Nigeria, and classified them into three distinct schools: The Neo-traditionalist; The Informalists; and The Academic. The first group works through an apprenticeship system and exhibits in their works traditionalist traits. The second group primarily accommodates all self-taught artists. While those who were trained in formal College or university are represented in the third group.

Susan Vogel (1991), writing an article titled “International art: The official story, in *African Explorers: 20th Century African Art*, expressed thoughts that made Stanley (1993) call it the most contentious of Vogel’s five strains of contemporary African art. In the article, Vogel expresses an ideology of nationalism (rather than ethnicity), of Negritude, of social consciousness, or simply, the freedom of the individual artist. This freedom, she says, includes the right to choose materials and media. Many artists turn to indigenous themes, but with a sophistication and an awareness of international trends. Choices are deliberate and self-conscious. Many are trained in art schools and have an international outlook. To question their African-ness is to misunderstand this group of artists (Stanley, 1993). It sounds contradictory that
Vogel, who calls these artists international in outlook and orientation, should say that the same artists "are removed from contact with Western avant-garde artists, or rather are preoccupied with their own collective issues in their own world." She further says that "international art is concerned more with high-minded, idealized subjects, and has been largely free of trivial, mundane or even personal content." How can these artists, who were trained and mentored in the West, who have international outlook and orientation, be removed or insulated from Western influence? When Vogel suggests that art criticism is non-existent, does she mean that art criticism was not available to the International art group? If she infers that, then she would be wrong. Again, it depends on the type of criticism that Vogel was talking about.

In 1991 Odita's Map of Knowledge 360° made its historical appearance on the world art history scene. Given its launching pad from the campus of the Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio, this art historical chart quickly impressed both students and scholars as an effective guide into the study of traditional and contemporary African art respectively. Odita's major concern about studies in art history in general has always been to try to find what is the most effective way of studying it, what methodology best fits this study. This sensitivity is understandable because, "...there is need for caution, given that study without methodology is unreliable and confusing, methodology without study is fruitless and flat...(Odita, 1980, p.4).

Before the emergence of Odita's Map of Knowledge 360°, students of
African art history had a very difficult time doing research in Africa because of the absence of a realistic and effective guide, so:

As the methodology blizzard sweeping the traditional and contemporary African art fields since the 1970's continues unabated, the way of studying the two types of African art becomes even more critical. Odita's Map of Knowledge 360° has come to the rescue, allowing for the systematic blending of text, visual images, graphics, charts of Africa, research data and even the identifying qualities of traditional and contemporary works of African art (Odita, 1991, p. 5).

Carol Costlow (unpublished manuscript), after being introduced to and using the Map of Knowledge in the Introductory stage of Art History 216, says that:

...the problem of misunderstanding of African art objects does not only lie in the fact that most writers in this area are Westerners, but rather, also with the researchers using wrong methodologies. What would the study of anything become without a methodology?

Without a serious guide, a study of any kind, but especially one that deals with cultures that are very different from ours, becomes unrealistic and subjective and often ends up as a collection of myths and legends, depending on the fecundity of the writer's mind. A study without an adequate methodology will be like sailing through an ocean without a chart, groping one's way through a labyrinth in the dark, or exploring the precincts of the Grand Canyon in a moonless night without a guide. It is at this point, the edge of the precipice, that Odita warns us that we are at the brink of a bottomless pit of methodologies in African art, and The Map of Knowledge is screaming: “Don't jump!”
The Map of Knowledge 360° (see Frontispiece), contains three major components: The Past, articles 1 - 6; the Present, articles 21 - 25; and the Future, articles 7 - 20. Briefly, the Past involves: The Model of Traditional African Art; Principles of Traditional African Art; Man and His Beginning; Socialization Process; Man and his Passions; The Mastery of the Universe; The Realm of Death, and the Spirit World; Ethnic groups of Africa; and Rivers. The Present encompasses: African Nations and Capitals; Principles of Contemporary African Art of Bintu, Kuntu, Skokian and Awo; Working terms; and The Model of Contemporary African Art. The Future involves: Important Issues in African Art; Art Analysis; 12 Points Strategy; Experimentation; and so on. Aesthetically, the Map is a beauty to behold.

Odita (A Guide to Odita’s Map of Knowledge 360°, 1991, p.5) calls the Map:

a hyperdevice that provides a "reference library" at one's fingertips, where one can sift through the ways and means of studying and researching the two types of African art instantaneously. Before Odita's Map...even the most sophisticated methodology in African art could not permit a Pan-African convenient study and research of similar themes of the art that are based on theory and practice consistent with African culture and tradition.

Udo Udoma, a Nigerian art critic, after studying a range of classifications of the art practices manifest on the Nigerian art scene, upheld Odita's classification of contemporary art, Kuntu, Skokian and Awo as the most effective and viable in the study of contemporary Nigerian art. He had looked
at the proposals of Ola Oloidi, Dele Jegede, etc before his conclusion that: "The classifications introduced by Odita seem most appropriate. They effectively describe the different forms of expression in Nigeria. They give a more definite idea of the style, so they seem more appropriate as a starting point for the study of contemporary African art" (The Eye, 1996, p17-18).

Odita had warned that the study of African art (or any other non-Western culture) calls for dedication and diligence since lack of one or both of those would lead to baseless assertions. His view, which is in line with the recommendations of the Colloquium of the 2nd Black World Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977, has been challenged in many quarters. What seemed to have drawn the most resistance is his insistence that scholars studying African art history should be well grounded in African history if they are interested in finding the real facts about African arts and culture. This writer calls for more than a fickle knowledge of African history and recommends that Africanists should be more than strangers to the peoples that they are studying; they should be able to interact with them, not through interpreters, but directly; they should learn to speak their languages.

One of the opponents of this point of view projected by Odita (1980) and implied by Jegede (1983) respectively is Roy Sieber a notable in the study of African traditional art. In reacting to such recommendations, Seiber fumed.

Roy Sieber, a key figure in traditional African art scholarship stands in a class of his own. His contributions to the field cannot be overestimated, but the
only weak point in his achievement is his conservatism in the very sensitive area of the study of African art. The problem with the study and therefore results emanating from it with regards to traditional African art, and to a great extent contemporary art, does not lie with the documentation of the traditional ways of the people, or their ceremonies. The problem seems to lie with forming a durable, testable, and acceptable theory and an equally effective methodology for studying it. Sieber recommended thus, that:

This methodology should include such things as concepts of the objects, form, style, technique, use, aesthetics, meaning, iconograph, the author, history, time, place, all that sort of thing... (Seiber, 1993, p.2).

If Seiber truly meant the above recommendation, why would he object strongly to identical recommendations such as Odita (1980), which are considered inevitable in the study of African art? The dangers inherent in the counsel that he advocates far outweighs the successes that he has scored in his many decades of studying traditional African art. His belief that each individual has the right to chose whatever one feels comfortable with in the study of the art history of non Western peoples is as dangerous as it is a contradiction of the wise prescription that he had made earlier on. One may rightly guess that it was either anger, pride or ignorance that inspired the following outburst by Seiber:

I don't want anybody telling me that I have to study something, if I don't want to study it...I don't have to study everything. In fact I am annoyed. Why must we all, study all aspects of African art? Scholarship allows us, I think allows me, to at least without a bad conscience to study any or all aspects that, the scholar, the...
individual, want to study... (Sieber, 1993, p3)

Dr. Sieber can choose whatever he wishes to study and has the inalienable right to get about it the way he pleases. This cannot be challenged. However, would studies controlled by scholar's whims and caprices be suitable for publishing for the general art history public? Clearly, it is important to design a workable methodology for the study of art and life, especially for the study of those cultures that are very different from the Western European's, such as African, Oriental or Oceanic cultures.

This recommendation is very much in line with the observation of many Africanists, students and scholars alike. For example, A. Ajepe reminded European scholars interested in the study of African traditions that:

The transcendentalism of African art, which constitutes its great attraction necessarily makes it enigmatical to the people steeped in fundamentally different cultures. Europeans should realize that their interpretation of primitive arts are conditioned by their own collective representation. How can he possibly understand the intricacies of the religious art of Africa if he didn't know the whys, the hows and what is contained in the concept and context.

The need for and benefit of heeding the counsels of Odita, Ajepe and others who have made the same prescriptions for the study of African art are buttressed by statements made by two principal scholars of traditional African art, Rene Wassing and Frank Willet. "Whenever we...nonAfricans talk of African art" said Rene Wassing (1968)."we apply, however we may try to avoid it, the standards we are accustomed to in our own culture". Frank Willet (1971) agreed when he said that the most significant studies in traditional
African art are those of limited scope dealing with the art of a single society or area of Africa, and dangerously generalizing their findings to include the whole continent of Africa. He went on to encourage more vigorous research and cautioned that though:

We have writings that help us to enjoy African art,...yet they are in some ways , fallible guides, for they start from the premise of Western ideas of beauty and all too often, express themselves ethnocentrically.

It is interesting and encouraging to note that Sieber subtly but surely and very late consented to and supported the complete study of a culture if the full information about it is to be got and in full:

Basically, my point about this tendency towards losing touch with the object, is that in a sense, the study of African art has become so involved with certain theoretical bases that our inquiry is becoming disconnected from fundamental issues of style, form, technique, and aesthetics. I consider that I am partly to blame for this situation insofar as I have pushed hard for context studies. But never did I intend that one should lose sight of the object and the concept of the aesthetic in the society that produces it. (Sieber, 1993,p5)

Hassan Salahi, (1993) in his book Creative Impulses / Modern Expressions: African Art Today, pp.1 - 14) writes that "African scholarship needs a new frame work and paradigms for assessing and analyzing contemporary African art. It is not being well served by existing ones. At the several attempts at definition so far advanced, one element that is always present is the artists' search for a new identity. Why is this so important? It is true that a central intellectual concern for the academic artists, coming from whatever part of the continent, is the quest for "African-ness" in their work.
Salahi then calls into question the facile dichotomy "traditional" and "contemporary"— and a parallel concept, "authenticity"—as being no longer valid. He needs to see the artist as a whole complete individual, a product of his experiences and personal history, and as a player within the creative process, which also includes his audiences and patrons and the social milieu within which he works. Art is essentially a communicative process and must be analyzed as such. Salahi suggests a "dialogic" relationship between the artist and audience. "The pernicious tendency to continually categorize the product, the art work (elite, traditional, popular, tourist) must be resisted" (Stanley, 1994, pp.7-8)

Janet Stanley, 1993, called Jean Kennedy's book, New Currents and Ancient Rivers: Contemporary African Artists in Generation of Change, "the summation of thirty years of personal and professional involvement with artists of Africa, which is both a survey and a celebration of Africa's finest." Since sub-Saharan Africa is too vast to be encompassed in one volume, Kennedy selected around 150 artists to illustrate what she felt represented "the vitality and originality of contemporary creativity from the continent." "Her odyssey begins in Nigeria, which she knows best, and continues in West Africa..." (Stanley, 1993, p.9).

Kennedy, whose work had been cited in previous paragraphs, under Introduction / Historical background, no doubt wrote a volume that does call attention to itself, not only by the size of the book, but also by the extent of her
research, and especially, her extensive experience with Nigerian traditional as well as contemporary art. It could be said that she wrote as an insider. Of premium importance is her recognition of the place of traditional art in contemporary Nigerian art. She agrees that:

The wellspring of today's varied forms and styles among Nigeria's contemporary artists is in large part the diversity of its traditional cultures. A visit to the Nigerian Museum in Lagos highlights their complex and manifold heritage...This impressive legacy is background and source for the largest group of contemporary artists in Africa, and it is out of this traditional context that new art is being created (Kennedy 1993,9).

It is this kind of sensitivity to the truth concerning African art that African artists rely on the cultures of the people for expression, that ranks, in this writer's opinion, Kennedy's book above her Western contemporaries. Her conviction does not shift when it comes to recognizing the reciprocity between cultures, foreign and traditional, a phenomenon that resulted in the contemporary Nigerian art. She contended that:

Contemporary artistic experience became evident when the Nigerian renaissance, which began in the sixties with political independence, spread like a contagion among writers and artists who combined traditional forms with modern ones. The syncretic results were fascinating: some were romantic, or strongly influenced by Western imagery, or intensely personal, or strikingly original, or mixtures of several of these characteristics" (Kennedy,1992,p.29).

Kennedy dedicated chapter three of her book primarily to establishing the relationship between the old and the new styles of artistic expression, hence the chapter was titled, "Bridges" and subtitled, "Predecessors in
Nigeria. In the preface, Kennedy said that she had chosen those artists:

...whom I feel are the foremost of this modern expression and whose art is fresh and imaginative...[whose] paintings, [and] graphics...are an important part of a growing renaissance. In them I find vitality and originality.

Although Kennedy had said that her book is not all-inclusive, one begins to wonder why such a vast material is unable to get beyond what appears to be the invisible wall that has stopped researchers from representing the African/Nigerian "newbreed" artists. The term newbreed should not communicate the feeling of the artists being spoken of as neophytes, inexperienced, or mere apprentices. They are not only independent, but they are creative and indefatigable experimenters who have toppled existing styles and exalted their own creations. They have now become members of the once elite art organizations, and have even founded rival ones. Oloidi, in his article "Who is the New African Artist?: Aspects of African Spirit" (1988), had tried to introduce the new artists to the art world. Oloidi submitted that the new generation of modern African artists are those who came of age post-independence, the group that seeks to differentiate itself from the earlier generation, who were products of colonial art institutions or foreign education. The roll call of the artists in his list included Boni Okafor and Tayo Adenaike, very vivid examples of the fecundous minds that are often encountered among the "newbreed" artists on the contemporary Nigerian art scene.

It is not with difficulty that one finds that Kennedy's choices in the 1990s are Ulli Beier's and Willet's in the 1960s, and Mount's in the 1970s. Why has
research into such a living 'organism' as art, a visual manifestation of a
people's culture, been limited to a group of 'old masters'? It gives one the
impression that the art being discussed has finally drawn a horizontal line on
the 'art-cardiac monitor'; it suggests dormancy or death. Which is it with the
presentation of the state of art in Nigeria? This issue of the negligence of the
newbreed artists will be further discussed in the sub-chapter titled “In Search of
a Methodology” in the Appendix.

In spite of the fairly significant amount of good materials produced so
far, there is absolutely no doubt that a lot more work is needed if the true
intensity and sophistication of the works of the contemporary Nigerian art and
artists are to be made known to the world of art. A world that has been fed an
immense quantity of subjectivity should be presented with an equal amount of
objectivity on the subject of Contemporary African Art and Artists. A
determined effort should be made by scholars to get beyond the ‘Old Masters’
and discover that the students of art schools of yesterday have certainly
become ‘Masters’ in their own right today. Only in this way can one say without
fear of contradiction that the literature produced is truly on Nigerian art. Only
then can it be said to be representative of all productive artists, and not one of
an influential group or groups of artists, men and women whose achievements
are sometimes more political than artistic.

In 1998, Kathy Curnow Nasara seems to be concerned by the lack of
durable literature on African art; whereas she says, referring to the U.S., that:
Nationwide there are less than 100 African art Ph.D's (mostly traditional African art concentration) a number dwarfed by other branches of art history. The paltry number of African scholars symbolizes the formerly low status of the field, even though generations of modern and contemporary artists have been influenced by African art (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 1995,p.2d).

She further claims that there are no authoritative histories on African or African-American art. This writer disagrees with that claim because it is not only very questionable, but also too widely generalized. Dr. Kathy Nasara then made a disheartening revelation about what seems the main reason why books (some or most?) are written on African art:

Anyone who writes a popular and respected text stands to make a tidy sum in royalties (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 4/9/95).

Here, Dr. Nasara failed to explain what she meant by "popular and respected text" or what would qualify a text as desirable. This omission leaves her readers with the impression that she has not read a good number of the materials, especially those written in the nineties. Indeed much dependable research has been done and precious knowledge unknown has been unearthed.

It is noteworthy that on the eve of the 'completion' of this research, an extensive exhibition, titled Diversity In Contemporary African Art: Causes and Effects, organized by Okechukwu Odita, was held at four different locations at Columbus Ohio between October 15-December 15 1997. This show was accompanied by a Gallery Guide which, in its opening article of the same theme as the exhibition, revealed a change in the nomenclatures earlier used.
by Odita to classify the four major artistic styles in contemporary Nigerian art. The styles formerly known and discussed in this work as Bintu, Kuntu, Skokian and Awo, now become; Vitu art, Sankofa art, Soyan art and Ijinla art. Former names remain valid where they had been used before the advent of the new names. But it is the intention of Odita that all scholars should adopt the new terms and their principles or characteristics.

The exhibition, which was based on acculturation—i.e., how African artists are affected by it while practicing in Africa—celebrated the African Studies Association's 40th Annual Conference. According to Odita, the exhibition was objectively examined in relation to change in contemporary African art. In summary, Odita (1997) said that history of art is the study of acculturation of art, which means "tracing how the effects of historical events on the art of a particular time" influence artists’ styles. In a sense, the exhibition showed a spectrum composed of the outcomes of the three essential conditions that feature in making "something different from what it is". What would that thing be if left alone?; What would it be during the change?; and What would it be after the change?. The individual merits of "before, during and after changes", identified with the new terms, are easily recognizable in the works exhibited.

Osa Egonwa, 1998, in a presentation titled Historical Evolution of the Contemporary Nigerian Visual Arts: An Interdisciplinary Reconstruction, during the National Symposium of Nigerian Art (1998), claims that:
The evolutionary history of the contemporary Nigerian visual arts has not been the particular subject of serious scholarly research, in spite of the large body of literature generated on that phase of Nigerian art. This is not to imply that its picture is not derivable from the critical synthesis of selected studies so far (p.17).

He further claims that available "histories" so far contain some or all of the following limitations: 1) Factual pieces of narratives which needs proper location in their historical niches, 2) Interpretations which hardly derive from actual evidence, 3) Absence of an embracive conceptual framework, and 4) General tendency towards the reliance on moncausal evidence in drawing far reaching conclusions (p.17).

Egonwa concluded that:
These observations, have generally led to the production of historical treatises which feebly illuminate the true picture, and, therefore, understanding of the contemporary art history of Nigeria... This limitation could be resolved using an appropriate framework (ibid.).

This study recognizes the work of students and scholars and also the existence of worthy and profound books on the subject of Contemporary African art. Its plea is that every work, no matter how insignificant it may seem, be tolerated. It is possible that there is a paragraph or even a statement in a work that could generate important discussion in academic circles—discussions that could in turn generate new thoughts and philosophies, and inspire research and publications, all to the benefit of art and art lovers the world over.
SKOKIAN ART: SCULPTURE

This chapter deals mainly with sculpted works of various types, including works in wood, cement and bronze. There are seven sculpted works discussed to show physical three dimensional works in Skokian or realistic style. The artists and works discussed represent four regions in Nigeria, namely; Eastern (Anambra, Imo, Enugu and Abia states), Western (Ibadan, Lagos, Ogun, etc), Mid-Western (Bendel), Riverine (Cross Rivers). This discussion includes the following artists and their works: Christian Nwokocha: The Chained Man; Abayomi Barber: General Mohammed; and Oba Aderemi; Ben Enwonwu: Sango; Ben Ekanem: Queen Amina; and Obiajulu Ekwenchi: The Ofala Festival.

The Chained Man or Portrait of Oppression.

Christian 'Chris' Nwokocha

Concrete cement, steel/iron rods, metal wire, 6Ft, 1984

Figure 2.1

The Chained Man, is a freestanding open sculpture. It measures 6ft from its base. The principal medium is concrete cement which covers an
amature of steel rod and wire mesh. It is a work that conforms completely with
the Skokian art style, its theory and its principles. It is a seeming imitation of
nature, a revelation of the truths hidden in nature. Aesthetics as in visual
beauty becomes second consideration; and the idea that the artist conceives is
beyond art for art's sake. It reflects the absolute idea, the essence of his
creation.

Christian Nwokocha is a graduate of the Institute of Management and
Technology, Enugu, majoring in sculpture. His interest in other areas of the
visual arts, fine and applied arts, was evident in the impressive works that he
produced in painting, ceramics, and even graphics. However, the
overpowering influence that sculpture had over him contributed to his abiding
interest in three dimensional art. It is interesting to note that his love for robust
three dimensional objects, and especially the choice of the realistic art style as
a vehicle for his artistic expression, manifested also in his paintings.
Nwokocha, himself, is sinewy, spiny but concretely built and walks with the
springy steps reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's protagonist character, Okonkwo,
in his renowned best selling book, Things Fall Apart. His gait is characteristic
of master-wrestlers. He is very physical and devotes his spare time to
Taekwondo, a form of Eastern martial arts. Nwokocha has done several
commissions for private individuals and organizations. His principles and
discipline, informed by his Christian upbringing and his astute devotion to
Taekwondo, blends with his loud and transparent dislike for all types of
oppression to allow him to construct the sculpture. In all its ramifications, the Chained Man brings back memories of Michelangelo's Bound Slave. The Chained Man goes beyond mere exhibition of the artist's ability in copying nature, but vividly captures the situations in different places of the world, especially, the apartheid regime in South Africa. His Chained Man, which could be some sort of sublimation, is not representative of any one people's dreams, dreads, fears or aspirations. It is a colossus that symbolizes a universal feeling i.e., the aspiration towards political, cultural and economic freedom. He seemingly amplified the feelings expressed by Ben Enwonwu in his semi-abstract sculpture, Anyanwu or The Awakening.

The Chained Man, which exhibits revolt in its most acute form, shows a man who is bound by chains, real ones, struggling to free himself. The chain though tangible, has also been used metaphorically to represent other definitions or dimensions of slavery and savagery by man against man. The work testifies rather loudly to the photo-realistic qualities of the unadulterated or authentic Skokian art style in Nigerian art. This style is based upon the study of man and nature, and the faithful representation of the same.

The center of activity in this work is the head, and especially the face which looks grotesque. This quality is made possible by the sudden twist of the head to the left, a possible reaction to the infliction of a telling punch or kick. The deep-set eyes peep through ridged mounds and swollen, bruised and raw flesh, while the nostrils are wide and ajar in the attitude of a speeding horse.
The typical African lips have been exaggerated to communicate the severity of the beating that went on before or shortly after the man's captivity. As the head is thrown backward fully distending the neck complexes, the lower neck pit connection appears buried into the dense muscle of the shoulder blades. The arched and severely stretched diaphragm appears as a great vaulting tunnel of bone. at the base of the front of the chest and clavicles. All this antagonistic action between agitated muscles draws the man's entire frame into an unnatural pose.

As the chained man protests, his intensely arched back draws up the nipple disk making the abdominal mass cascade in a series of undulant ripples. There is an intricate poetry woven by the ripples and mounds of bulging muscles and tautly drawn sinews and nerves. Flowing in tune with the poem, the lower pelvic wedge is tipped forward, making the underbelly recessive, and the rear buttock area arching upward.

A profile view of the right leg, bent at the knee, shows the structural rhythm with an 's' line curve. The same is true of the left leg with the knee planted firmly on the base or platform on which the Chained Man travails. The huge left foot is moved forward as the man makes a determined effort to stand up, possibly to face his adversaries. It is amazing that for all the similarities in musculature of the arm and the leg, Nwokocha succeeded, through intensive Skokian style presentation, in showing the unmistakably different structural rhythms that each limb has. Like Ben Enwonwu (figure 2.5), Christian
Nwokochas' greatness consists in an extraordinary versatility that led him through a spectrum of themes fundamental to human experience and through a style, Skokian, that expresses them with unprecedented veracity and force.

It is glaring that the *Chained Man* has gone beyond the peak of patience. He is not a harbinger of what impends, but represents the now, the reaction, the climax, results of long accumulated grievances. As one stares at this man in all its tenseness, one's only expectation would be the possible breaking of the chain. One can almost hear muscles distend and sinews tighten, the lips breaking into the characteristic 'kia' sound of the karateka. This lends power to his effort. Each swelling vein and tightening sinew amplifies the resolve of the man to free himself.

When the mind gets involved in appreciating the work, one begins to 'see' blood coursing through the veins and arteries as great pressure is put on them. We soon transcend seeing and begin to feel the anguish, the pain being inflicted on this man. It is possible to feel this intense emotion because of the Skokian style deployed in the story telling. The spectator can identify with this chained man because in a sense the sculpture is 'flesh and blood'. The artist's faithful representation of a human being and man's inhumanity to man, quickly touches off human emotion in its favor. An abstract presentation of the same theme will not solicit and capture the same amount of sympathy and provoke thought as much as this Skokian style portrayal.

Though *Chained Man* is naked, a suggestion of naked brutality, he
does not communicate the same intense eroticism as the smooth and effeminate *David* by Michelangelo. This is because the urgency and sheer intensity portrayed in the *Chained Man*, rob it of any suggestions of obscenity. Nwokocha's power of imagination, drama, and observation are communicated in every plane and hollow of the sculpture. He agrees very strongly, as did Aina Onabolu, that whatever can be said greatly through art must be said through the human figure, and this must be as the eye sees it.

The Skokian art style, which is the major strength of this work, is manifested in the artist's adherence to the characteristics and values put forward by Odita (*Odita's Map of Knowledge*, 3600, 1991, article 23) For example, *the Chained Man* is a motif derived from African tradition, there is a strong evidence of the use of a posed model showing that the artist had a formal or informal art training, the form is modeled realistically. The Skokianess/realness of the statue is convincing, even if one has to shut one's eyes and just feel the form. Because of the overwhelming presence of artistic value, the *Chained Man* will pass as an unadulterated Skokian art work. New conventions cannot erode or wither the effectiveness of the *Chained Man*, because the artist has, exploiting the Skokian art style, gone beyond the physical limitations of man, and captured the state of spiritual anemia in which man will continue to live, until he is completely liberated by the only force greater than man, God.

The success of this work as a socio-political commentary is testified to
by the controversy that it generated. Moralists, insensitive to the commentary, and complaining about the nudity, would not be pacified by any explanation except the destruction of the entire sculpture, or, at least, by veiling of its genitals. Despite the allegations and controversy, it is possible to stand before this work, dialogue extensively with it, and not be offended by its nudity. This is because the emotional energy generated by the figure tends to take your imagination beyond its nakedness. It takes you into a sphere where one is now only concerned with reality, symbolism and significance.

Christian Nwokocha demonstrated his mastery of human anatomy by depicting a complete nude in the Skokian style. He grasped, in the process, the essential principle that the human body is a blend of bones, flesh, muscles and nerves, and that they obey the conscious and unconscious shifting of the human body. This type of knowledge and understanding of the human anatomy is only possible through a persistent study and analysis of a human model, as the Skokian artist does. The *Chained Man* is expected to survive not only the flurry of new conventions and inventions in art, but also the inevitable harsh judgment. It will accomplish this because with the Skokian style presentation, it has been able to reveal something deeply and permanently true about the state of man, the one quality of great works that lends them the ability to survive time.

It is evident in the work that, there is a convergence of; the western European realistic art technique and, the Nigerian subject matter.
Adult Education

Unknown artist

Concrete cement, steel wire, metal rods, 5ft 3ins x 6ft 3ins, 1985

Figure 2.3

The Adult Education, produced by an anonymous artist, is a concrete seated figure of an elderly man. It is bearing a piece of board or slate on which he dutifully tries to scribble the first four letters of the alphabet. The sculpture was executed in 1985 and was located at the sculpture garden of the Department of Fine and Applied arts of the Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu. The work was commissioned by the Ministry of information as part of its national adult education campaign. The figure is interesting to the point of comedy. This is because of the artist's choice of an aging traditional Chief as his model for telling a very important story as part of the Nigerian government's anti-illiteracy campaign. Of note is the intensity of concentration with which this 'illiterate' old Chief is trying to capture Western education which had eluded him when he was young.

Because of its intensity and animation, what first captures a viewer's attention is the face, which is the most interesting segment of this work. The general atmosphere is serene, and, in spite of the intense concentration and focus that rival those of surgeons, there is elegance and tenderness reflected. The eyeballs are partially hidden by the tiny bags of flesh under the eyelids and the overlapping or drooping aged skin of the eyebrows. However, even in the
dark cavities of the sockets, one discerns a peering pair of focused eyes as 
the mind drives the stiff and unsure fingers to write. The pointed nose, not 
European in any way, looks over the lips that have been drawn into a mere 
bas relief by the tightened jaw and facial muscles. If one looked sustainedly at 
the mouth, the sound of gritting teeth becomes almost audible. There is 
something of a childlike innocence about this work. Observe especially the 
possessiveness indicated by the man's grip on the board as his face reflects a 
burning desire to update himself academically. His dim eyes are focused on 
the magic that his hand is working. Considering the general atmosphere 
pervading the figure, It appears that his mind more than his hand is making the 
magic take place. There is not so much a physical strain suggested in the 
seated figure as much as there is a feeling of psychological strain created by 
the effort to scribble some alphabets. The only possible physical discomfort 
would result from the pulling up of the left leg to act as a support for the 
substrate on which the figure is writing. By doing this, the artist harmoniously 
balanced the negative spaces created between the limbs with the positive, 
thereby adding to the dynamism and stability of the work. Profile orientation 
shows an arched back which, considering the advanced age of the subject, 
seems bent into an unnatural arch. His concentration, interest, and excitement 
are further testified to by the raised left leg which has consequently drawn up 
the buttocks. Unless one feels and becomes part of his effort to gain literacy, 
it would be hard to comprehend such a pose.
Looking through the crook of the bent right hand, one sees the lower torso, which is partially hidden from direct observation. The loin cloth, which is secure over the shoulder, falls into a heap of corrugated textile, crushed underneath by the weight of the crouching figure. Its belly assumes the same quality and could hardly be told apart from the drapery which covers the upper torso. Considering the size of the hands, which are well defined but lack ambitious muscles, and the bulkiness of the shoulders, which carry a fairly large head, one would rightly express fear as to whether those spiny, mannerist-looking legs could carry such a gigantic trunk. Though the shoulders are broad in a way, they are very subtle in comparison with those of Chained Man. The squashed short neck is shaded in the front by the long, graying beard, while the hair, barely showing below the traditional chieftaincy cap, is treated fairly realistically.

Looking at the seated figure from the back view, a viewer is wrapped in wonderment at the amount of diligence in observation and hard work that the artist put into this presentation. For example, the bones of the vertebral column become visible and easily numbered under the skin as the forward incline of the figure draws taut his aging skin. The texturing of the skin and textile being done differently, one smooth and the other coarse, seems to be the artist's way of suggesting the age of the individual, and of creating areas of contrast between smooth and coarse surfaces. This is why, while the sauvely modeled body and the glazed skin give a feeling of suppleness, the
coarseness of the costume, creating some textural contrast or antagonism, induces a sweet sensation of push and pull between the surfaces.

The style, composure, and composition of the object are heavily conditioned by the Skokian artist's study of a human figure in various seating positions, used here in the presentation of a traditional person endeavoring to blend Western education, and, therefore, Western European culture into his African culture. The compact silhouette, cast at all sides by the shadow, contributes to the cool simplicity and dignity of the character and the activity represented here. Adding to the thrill are the designs in positive and negative spaces made by the varying degrees of angles constructed by the drawn-up leg, the elbows pointing out, and the intersecting diagonal made by the shoulders. All those elements have significantly facilitated the balance and harmony which contributes greatly to the success of this presentation. As the solid volumes bulge out of the dark recesses, the negative spaces provide the much needed windows and vents or breathing holes, giving the work an unquestionable stability and visual harmony. It is evident that the violence, the restlessness, even the dramatic dynamism, and the struggle found in the Chained Man has disappeared, leaving in its wake, a different kind of struggle, one for mental liberation through education. In many instances this work seems to be the reverse of the Chained Man, the only similarity being that both figures are involved in some sort of struggle for liberation.

The Skokian style approach in the execution facilitates its easy
comprehension and appreciation by all levels of the Nigerian society, especially by those illiterate adults for whom the campaign was launched. Abstraction in the rendering of form would have robbed the campaign of its most vital weapon and made it an exclusive aesthetic entertainment for the contemporary art-wise elite in the society. This would have denied the illiteracy campaign its message.

From all visible evidence, this artist has arrived at this realistic depiction through the blending of Western European realistic technique and the African model in total agreement with Skokian art style and certain of its Principles: such as the fact that this artist understands the human body, and that he has studied a real human model in various seating positions. This type of study is usually found among the formally or informally trained Skokian artists. The result, as testified to by Adult Education, is that the human proportions are true to life, the modeling, convincing. It is also easy to tell that the theme or motif is derived from Nigerian/African tradition. It can be concluded that because artistic values are dominant, Adult Education is overwhelmingly Skokian. The subject is both dynamic and dramatic, speaking directly to all levels of the Nigerian society, thereby serving the enlightenment purpose for which it was created. The artist caught and reproduced the split-second action that distills the very essence of the Government's anti-illiteracy campaign.
Portrait of General Muritala Mohammed

Abayomi Barber

Patinated plaster, 1.3 Life size

Figure 2.4

This is a life-size photographic representation of General Muritala Mohammed, the assassinated Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in military uniform. The portrait could be called a facsimile because of the accuracy of the artist, who appeared to have cast it directly from the face of the General, a technique reminiscent of the death-mask of some Roman portraitists. As well as being a testimony to veristic Skokian style, it shows unmistakable evidence of an intensely acute sense of observation by an artist whose only teacher is unadulterated nature. It appears that the artist embarked on this project after he had mastered the subject through the series of paintings and portrait of him that he had made (Bust of Mohammed, figure 3.14).

Abayomi Adebayo Barber was born on October 23, 1934 at Ile-Ife in Oyo State of Nigeria and attended Yaba Technical Institute and Central School of Arts and Crafts, London between 1960-1962. He studied casting and molding in the studios of Mancini and Tozer, Ltd. London. He continued his training from 1964-1967 in Oscar Nemon’s St. James’ Palace studio, London. Between 1960-1967, he worked in the studio of Mancini and Tozer, and in the British Museum as assistant to many of the well-known British sculptors. He
worked at the Institute of African studies as graphic artist and illustrator. He has actively participated as judge in a variety of regional and national art shows and contests and at one time was the artistic consultant at the Cultural Center, Ibadan. Abayomi Barber is currently a staff member at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of Lagos, where he runs a studio and produces breath-taking lifelike portraits of prominent Nigerians, in bronze and oil. His paintings reflect themes in Yoruba mythology in a romantically realistic style. Barber has participated in solo and group exhibitions both nationally and internationally across Europe.

Although Barber has an immense collection of works, he never had a solo exhibition in Nigeria until 1989 when Professor Ebun Clark, director of the Center for Cultural Studies of the University of Lagos, persuaded him to have one. It took Clark five years to persuade Barber to hold his first Solo exhibition in Nigeria. The exhibition was titled "Abayomi Barber: A Retrospective." The exhibition featured an array of 170 paintings, sculptures, drawings and pastels, some of them borrowed from their collectors for the exhibition. Speaking at the inaugural of the exhibition, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Professor Nurudeen Alao, observed that: "In this age when a lot of artists are difficult or deliberately eccentric, Abayomi has remained a consistent apostle of an art that is realistic style" (Ojukwu, 1989).

Abayomi Barber is currently a Senior Arts Fellow and Head of the Fine Arts Unit of the University of Lagos and has "succeeded in training a
generation of artists whose works have culminated in what is known as the Abayomi Barber School, surprisingly noted for unrealistic tendencies" (Ojukwu, 1989). Let it be noted that the said unrealistic tendency is not in the style of representation but in the concept of the idea. Skokian serves the surrealists or the super-realists who use the faithful or realistic representation of forms, as in Skokian, to present mystic thoughts, dreams, and fantasies in a way that lets every one understand the painting at a glance. An example is Barber's painting titled Goddess of the Sun. This painting makes Barber a realist as well as a super-realist. This mistaken identity is inspired by the fact that his paintings are as realistic as nature, but the concept, the idea is very much intuitive, in a realm outside the visual world.

One of the works exhibited was figure 2.3, the life-size patinated plaster bust of the former military Head of State of Nigeria, General Muritala Mohammed in full military outfit. Although this is a life-size portrayal of the subject in military outfit, the statue is closed, even rigid in its proud soldierly stance. The entire body is frontal with the face slightly tilted to the left to a less than three-quarter presentation. Shoulders are squared with hands stretched stiffly at his sides. Despite the frontality and the rigid attention stance, equaling that of the Kouros and kore, the general effect is one of grandeur and richness, expressive of General Mohammed's widely recognized sensitivity toward the affairs of his struggling nation.

There is no doubt as to the main focus of the artist; it is the face.
Military costumes exist beyond the generals, but there is only one Muritala Mohammed and that is the main preoccupation of Barber; to find him. The softness of the facial contour, and subtlety of its presentation, fathomed the personality and also accentuated the general demeanor of the subject. His hair is full, lending more richness to his already unblemished youthful face which is devoid of facial hair, but for a hint of the popular and fashionable military-style mustache. No easily discernible emotion can be found on this face except for a ghost of a smile that could be located at the ends of his lips which are depressed beyond the real borders of the mouth, and into the cheeks. The expression thus created has been interpreted by some spectators as a show of arrogance. But is it?

A micro-study of the facial features reveals a suggestion of royalty or even divinity. The smoothness of the broad forehead is disturbed by the prominent jutting out of two features, suggesting the emergence of horns. The horns in different African traditional cultures represent virility, fertility, potent power or energy, and even divinity. General Mohammed shows off a youthful skin, without any corrugations or blemishes, a nose that is typical of his Hausa-Fulani stock, fairly Caucasoid, overlooking his undeniably African full-lips. The lips are parted slightly as if in speech, and are simultaneously showing the typical smile of the late President.

The cheeks are rendered to suggest the beginning of a smile that is commonly called the melancholy smile. The eyebrows seem to have lifted on
the ridge for the sole purpose of sheltering the eyes and are constantly casting
the shadow that creates the mystery of a smile. In presenting the eye, the
artist intentionally piques the spectators and critics involvement by leaving the
eyes undefined. In this way, the artist creates a vacuum that would be filled by
the individual spectator's emotion. Faced with the combination of a sad brow
casting a deep shadow on the eyes, lips that are distended into typically
smiling ones, and blank eye socket, emotions portrayed could be anger, fear,
surprise, or joy. Which it is or what it is will depend on the state of mind of the
viewer, and, possibly, his opinion of Muritala Mohammed.

The Skokian artist, totally at home with his unrivaled keen sense of
observation of nature, captures, through conscientious study of the model,
General Mohammed's unique personality. This is unmistakably shown by one
of the most endearing of all his expressions, the stifled smile. This particular
feature kept people, Nigerians and foreigners alike, guessing at what that fixed
smile might stand for. It has been interpreted as the subject's rehearsed effort
to keep a smile from occurring.

This subtle but enigmatic face has lent itself to different interpretations.
Students of da Vinci may say that this Skokian artist, Barber, captured the
element that gave Mona Lisa her acclaimed mystic smile. Or did this devoted
Skokian artist decide not to stress the interior qualities of the smile, "leaving it
a smile trembling on the edge of becoming" (Faigin, 1990).

Abayomi Barber gave a loud testimony to the ability of the Skokian
artist to recognize and portray his environment truthfully. In this portrait, the
goal of the artist to be more than just a copier of visible nature is found in his
success in capturing the psychological in his subject. The figure is a good
testimony to the convergence of the Nigerian subject matter and, western
European realistic art technique

**Bust of Sir Adesoja Aderemi; The Late Ooni of Ife**

Abayomi Barber

Patinated plaster, 1.3 Life size. Date?

**Figure 2.5**

The portrait of *Oba Adesoji Aderemi, Ooni of Ife* is also the work of
Abayomi Barber, the author of *Muritala Mohammed*. In this closed sculpture,
one experiences again the painstaking approach by Abayomi Barber, a
Skokian artist who is dedicated to, and conditioned by his recognition of the
truth and the need to present and interpret it as honestly and sincerely as
possible. Some realists are known to have gone to great lengths to capture
and present the expression that they desired most from their subjects. For
example, Leonardo da Vinci deployed an orchestra and groups of jugglers and
clowns in order to hold the attention of his model, La Givconda, whose portrait
was later titled *Mona Lisa*. Gialorenzo Bernini, the giant of mannerist sculpture,
was said to have burnt his own leg to experience pain and better understand it
as he represented it in the *Martyr of St. Lawrence*. 
However, Abayomi Barber did not have to agonize or mortify his flesh to capture the person and personality of his sitter. He continually studied and reshaped the face in response to the sitter's different moods and impulses until it was safe to freeze the character, and cast it in concrete. To achieve this, the Skokian artist must be excruciatingly patient to explore the face in search of the attitude that best represents his subject. It is much like trying to extract threads of just one color but different sizes from a complicated tapestry. Great Skokian artists do this successfully, especially the veristic Skokian artist.

Barber again, as with the Portrait of Mohammed, studied the image of Oba Aderemi, produced several models and actual busts of the subject (Front & Profile Views of Aderemi; figs 3.13 &14) before creating this final masterpiece.

In his portrayal of Oba Adesoji Aderemi, the artist seems to have endeavored to deify him as his predecessors were deified. He did this by lending him an exaggerated or superhuman grandeur. The subject is presented in such a way as to communicate a supreme confidence with a touch of the arrogance of a Greek or Roman god. Like most of Barber's figures, Oba Aderemi stands in three quarter view, looking into space. The artist's chief interest seems to be in capturing the man's authority, rather than his emotions. The monumentality of its mass unite with the features and gesture to produce a recipe for overwhelming power. This power is only commensurate with the exalted positions of the Oba, who in no way is inferior to the ancient Priest-Kings.
Oba Adesoji Aderemii, who was Yoruba, exhibits the typical features of his people. For example, the most visual is the flayed nose, as seen in the world-famous Gelede Mask, or as represented in the universally acclaimed Heads of the Priest-King or the Oni of Ife.

Unlike Mohammed’s brows, which overhang the eyes and cast shadows on them, Oba Aderemi’s are pushed up and away from the eyes in definite arches. His eyes, as well as the entire face assume the swollen appearance of one who just woke from a disturbed sleep or one who has been hit many times across the face. The eyes, with bags or mounds of flesh underneath, have resultantly become half-closed, and in a deep shadow. Though hardly discernible from between the baggy lids, the eyes look proudly away, rather than engage the spectator in a dialogue. A reassuring smile did not save his physical, emotional, and spiritual detachment from the viewer. The feeling that one gets because Aderemi’s upper lid droops, covering a bit of the pupil, is that he is sleepy, or intoxicated. If this look is combined with a smile, or an appearance of one, as in the portrait of Aderemi, the net result is an expression suggestive of intoxicated pleasure. His prominent nose overlooks the thick lips which are parted as in a show of disgust at what he is observing. He looks ahead over the heads of the viewers, maybe of his subjects, into the distance as if uninterested in the event going on immediately before him. There is something of vaulting pride and arrogance about this royal personality even as the artist sought to endow him with the quality of the god-priest/kings. The
face and neck and the general robust look of Aderemi conveys that feeling that the Nigerian will express as good life. It is hard to say with certitude what Oba Aderemi is thinking or doing. Is he grimacing or sneering to show a lack of appreciation? Is the gentleman simply being thoughtful? Or is this the Skokian sculptor’s way of showing off his observation and mastery of the human form and his ability to, if he wishes, represent the thought and psychology behind the human face which, even at the brink of disaster, manages to smile? The answer is not as important as the awe-inspiring grandeur and magnificence that this portrait exudes.

The costume is the typical traditional Yoruba attire called konkosa, which is, usually, three-piece; a pair of trousers, an inside moderately sized shirt, and the voluminous outermost garment, which is embroidered. Sometimes, there is a cap to match. In the case of the Oba, this regalia has been dynamically presented to emphasize his position. The keen observation and vivid representation make it possible for a viewer to be able to differentiate between the inside shirt and the outer one. His cap is exquisitely ornamented with ‘X’ symbols that have been arranged in pairs and bordered by a series of strings of knots. On the spine of the cap, and running across the top to the front, four knots are symbolically placed. Drapery falls in various folds and thickness, cascading over the left shoulder of the Oba.

It is not surprising that the artist should search for the psychological, the minutest aesthetic value in his subject because, as Arnasson (1995) observed
in Africa, leadership art overlaps with manifesting aspects of the supernatural. The chiefs and kings, the likes of Oba Adesoji Aderemi wear rich attire with symbolic motifs for designs, exotic symbolic implements which evoke both majesty and mystery. The image of Aderemi is a good testimony to some of the invisible qualities, the desires and aspirations of the Chiefs and Kings in Africa. His image, accordingly, has been calculated to project political and spiritual powers. To be able to totally exhibit the political, spiritual/mystical capabilities of the Oba, the artist embarked upon what has been called intentional design redundancy or aesthetic overload. We find, then, that there is a conscious layering of sumptuous garments, jewelry, a proliferation of detailing and symbolic iconography, and complexity in as effort to communicate the sense of sufficiency, even excess.

Oba Aderemi, like most African traditional rulers, even some national leaders, epitomizes such an assemblage which constructs him as larger than life. This in turn radiates messages about wealth and power, both political and mystical. Authority is projected from the overflow of beads and textiles that are exotically and exorbitantly embroidered.

It is evident, in the subject discussed above, that the Skokian vocabulary is not limited to the blend of the ordinaries in Western realistic technique and African culture and tradition. (Indeed, one may observe that the Skokian artist has a loophole through which to sneak in at least one aesthetic value; cf. pp.29-30.) The artist is a very keen observer of nature, in which he
also sees more than meets the eye. He captures the vital elements in his culture and diligently filters them into his "new" technique of representation of nature. This study classifies this type of Skokian artist, *Dynamic Skokian artist*.

**Sango**

Ben Enwonwu

Concrete, Ht.?  

Figure 2.6

*Sango*, which Samson Uchendu had described as a "Tower of Power", is a concrete, free-standing sculpted figure representing the Yoruba god of thunder and lightening. Uchendu used the title dually to represent both the visual and conceptual elements in the work. Visually, its size and musculature is intimidating, as much as its conceptual divine power is frightening. These qualities are further emphasized by the high pedestal which allows the god to loom over the heads of passers-by, and its audience, respectively.

Benjamin Chuka Enwonwu was born on July 14, 1921, in Onitsha, Anambra State of Nigeria. He learned carving from his father, who was a sculptor. Between 1934 and 1937, Ben studied under Kenneth Murray at Government colleges, Ibadan and Umuahia. In 1944, he attended the Goldsmith College, London; Ruskin College, Oxford, 1944-1946; and Slades School of Fine Art, London, 1946-1948, graduating with first class honors. He studied at the postgraduate level in anthropology and ethnography, first at the
Ben Enwonwu taught fine arts at different levels. Before, during, and after his training at home and abroad, he held many distinguished positions at state, national and international levels. In 1948, shortly after his graduation from Slades, he was appointed art adviser to the Nigerian government, and for several years he toured and lectured extensively in the United States. He became a Fellow at the Lagos University in 1966-1968, and cultural advisor to the Nigerian Government, 1968-1971. In 1971-1975 he became the first professor of Fine Art at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife. In 1977, Enwonwu was appointed art consultant to the International Secretariat, Second World and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). He was a member of the Royal Academy of Art, London, and Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, London.

His works have been very widely exhibited at home and abroad, and his literary genius has been recognized and has guided many students and scholars of African art and art history. Ben Enwonwu died in 1993 after achieving a singular popularity in art.

*Sango*, in my opinion, is the sculpted work by Ben Enwonwu that shows the artist's fecundity. It shows a Skokian artist's ability to present a perfectly proportionate human anatomy, keeping in focus the basic principle of Skokian art style; which is, observance of nature and the closest possible
The artist, who was Igbo, chose his themes from the folklore of two of the three dominant Nigerian ethnic groups, Igbo and Yoruba. *Sango,* pronounced *shango,* the Yoruba god of thunder and lightening, is situated outside the Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA) Headquarters, Marina Lagos. Enwonwu’s consistent choice of traditional themes is ready testimony to his unfading insistence on Afrocentrism. He vigorously defended this a perspective until his death.

A look at *Sango,* an athletic and dramatically posed figure, tells at a glance that the artist was a master of human anatomy, a knowledge that has been exhibited convincingly in the proportionate and dynamically posed body of the god. The god’s stance brings to mind *Liberty Leading the People,* Eugene Delacroix,1830. Enwonwu employed the great extreme dynamism, attributed to the works of Classical Greece, but which he absorbed originally from his Igbo/Nigerian culture. Such dramatic or suspenseful posturings are common in wrestling and masquerading, the two activities which are staged frequently within the Igbo culture from which Enwonwu hailed. To increase and to facilitate more movement in the figure of *Sango,* he added that sense of spatial existence credited to Hellenistic as well as Baroque sculptors. (Let it be noted that Enwonwu did not learn this from the antiquity but from his environment.) During a discussion that this writer had at the Warren Robins African Art Library, at the Smithsonian Institute, with a research student from
Chicago, it was revealed that Enwonwu had experienced this 'sense of spatial existence' at farming sites, where the forest had been torched, leaving, rows of standing blackened stems and branches. These remnants can be mistaken for rows of sculptures made in a very wide variety of postures, from intensely dramatic to subtle gesturing. Sango definitely looks like a character out of a theater.

It is evident that the artist did take some liberties to exaggerate in order to more convincingly tell this story and enhance the already overflowing drama in the work. One can see that the hands are large, especially the right one, which holds up the symbol of the God of Thunder, the two headed ax. He looks up with expectation into the skies from where the thunder and lightening would come, and squeezes his left hand into a stiff ball of flesh and bone. This action distended the muscles and sinews to the breaking point. Its funnel-shaped, Arnold Schwarzneggar-like trunk bear testimony to the dreaded strength and portfolio of this god. As he raises the right hand, bearing the symbol, the action pulls the entire skin over the abdominal and thoracic regions of his body. This is done so tautly unto the bones that the shapes of the underlying thoracic cage, but especially the ribs, are visible.

The eternal youthfulness and physique are derived from the traditional folk stories of the Yoruba and Igbo, of spirit lands inhabited by handsome giants and their adoring nymphs. The sharply defined facial features seem too tender and feminine in contrast with the bulbous biceps and the generally
athletic body-builder's frame of the sculpture. This could be the artist's way of suggesting the timelessness of the god. Worthy of attention is the god's introspective look, which is accented by the blank stare. Note that the figure is not propitiating a god, but commanding the forces of nature with authority, and with the certainty that he will be obeyed.

It is easy to see that Enwonwu was not trying to construct the likeness of a bodiless god but that he was merely interested in a visual representation of the god's authority. He did this successfully, exhibiting his unique technical virtuosity, especially in the way that he handled concrete as if it were wax. Fully conscious of the expressive potential of Skokian theory, Enwonwu was convinced that extra emotional excitement could be communicated by agitated and free drapery that flies in the wind. Thus, as this god charges forward, drapery clings to his body revealing the position of his 'manhood' which has been accented by the lifting of the drapery around his crouch.

The power and dynamism of this Skokian sculpture is not in the unseen authority of the god, but in the visible attributes designed by a realist who understood the human body and all its parts, and knew how they work in cooperation with one another to bring about locomotion. As a true Skokian artist, Ben Enwonwu embodied all aspects of the Skokian style, its fundamentals, its principles and its sub-types. He was at ease with the real, the ideal, and the spiritual, and with such diverse human forms and conditions. Using this vast knowledge and experience, the artist created a work which is
as firmly planted on its base as it is firmly founded on the Skokian principles. A work whose overwhelming artistic qualities, and very insignificant conceptual qualities as in aesthetic values, blend with the majesty and authority in the pose and the musculature of the figure to produce a recipe of magnificence, fitting the portfolio of Sango, the god of thunder and lightening.

Borrowing Tansey's expression in his description of another sculpture (Gardener's, p.253), to find an image of comparable grandeur and authority, equaling that of Sango, one must go back over fifteen hundred years to the classical rock portrait of the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, and for dramatic pose, one should search into Hellenistic and Baroque sculptures. However, to find the source of Enwonwu's inspiration, one should look to Africa, where Enwonwu looked.

**Ofala Festival**

Obiajulu Ekwenchi

Wood panel, 1982

**Figure 2.7**

This narrative in wood panel features one of the highlights of the annual Ofala festival, celebrated to commemorate the coronation or installation of a traditional Chief/King. This is most common among the Igbo speaking peoples of the Eastern part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Some Igbo speaking members of other non-Eastern peoples also celebrate the Ofala. In the
presentation under review, the artist captures the moment as the Chief steps out to tour the arena and meet with his subjects. During this time, he stops at different intervals to dance in a most royal and dignifying fashion, to the irresistible throbbing of the royal drums, blending with the persistent flattery of the flutist who showers praises on His Royal Highness.

The artist, Obiajulu Ekwenchi, was born in Egbu. He is a native of Oba in Idenmili Local Government area of Anambra State. He attended, between 1974 and 1985, both the Comprehensive Secondary School Nawfia and the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. He earned the High School diploma and latter, the Ordinary National Diploma and the High National Diploma respectively in Fine and Applied Arts. His major is sculpture, but Ekwenchi, as many other young fine arts graduates, is versatile, able to hold his own in painting, ceramics, and textiles. Due to his unprecedented maturity and expertise exhibited while a student, he was hired by his alma mater as an instructor. He has since held that position.

This young artist’s success is testified to by the number of awards he has won and the commissions he has executed. These include, but are not limited to, A 1982 National Award, first position at the Fifth National Festival of Arts and Culture held at Port Harcourt. At the same contest, he individually won the Gold Gong for Anambra State with his sculpture titled, *The First Love*. In the same year, he won a special competition sponsored by the Rotary Club and was subsequently commissioned to design and execute the **Monument of**
Peace. This great testimony to the artist's understanding of the human anatomy, as well as the diversity and uniqueness of every individual's emotional and psychological state of mind, is mounted at the intersection of Presidential Road and the Government House Road, Enugu. In 1986 Obiajulu Ekwenchi was commissioned by the Ekulu Rotary Club to design and execute *Dawn Of Nationalism* in memory of the coal miners massacred in 1949. This sculpture is mounted at the round-about of the Relief Market at the exit into the Onitsha-Enugu Express Road. *The Sportsman*, one of his major accomplishments, is mounted at the intersection near the main entrance into the Nnamdi Azikiwe Sports Stadium in Enugu. His works, especially his life size portraits, are in the homes and collections of private individuals, businesses, and government establishments.

Writing the foreward in Ekwenchi's brochure for his exhibition titled, *SUPREMACY-First Solo Step*, this writer (1987, p. 5) observed that Ekwenchi's concept is basically African, but that the artist does not operate blindly in the strict definition of traditional concept and techniques; rather, he has synthesized traditional with Western European and Oriental streams of thought and philosophies. This blending is unmistakable even in the artist's statement (1987, p.9) in the same brochure: "I have to obey wood, for the Gods have chosen me to serve through it...Wood sometimes tells me what to carve on it...many have tried this but failed. Some could not reap the fruit of their labor, they die while trying their hands on wood. It has to do with..."
ancestral legacy, the spirit of the dead, the body and soul...”

*Ofala Festival* is a closed bas relief sculpture carved within a spherical, egg-shaped format. The edges are bordered by various types and shapes of traditional motifs and symbols; e.g., elephant tusks, and shells. The composition, which is marked by vertical and diagonal lines and punctuated by isolated circles, is placed against a backdrop of wavy lines which follow the arch described by the two elephant tusks. The two visible circular shapes appear as hand-held ceremonial fans held here by the Chief and a figure to the left whose costume, especially the heavily feathered cap, suggests the Chief Priest, traditional medicine-man, the spiritual adviser to the Chief.

The main focal point is the centralized Chief, flanked on all sides by his immediate cabinet of ministers and councilors. The importance of his exalted status is furthered by the artist’s observation of the traditional, social-hierarchical perspective. This ensures that the most important person in a presentation is shown as the tallest, largest, or the most imposing. Since he is the center of the activity, all the elements in the composition, both animate and inanimate, seem to incline towards him, as if attracted by an overpowering stimulus. It is important to state that the Chief possesses enormous social, political and spiritual power; being not only a visible entity, but also a representative of the invisible spirits, the gods and ancestors. Though shirted, the physique of the chief is discernible, an evidence of good life. His lower body is voluminous as a result of the very heavy flowing gown. The chief's
head is adorned by a feathered traditional chieftain cap, while a long ring of beads graces his royal neck and nestles on the lower chest.

The facial features are those of a man in a reverie; grave and introspective. He wears the blank far-away look that is believed to be the chief's psychic intercourse with the spirits of ancestors. There seems to be an effort on the part of the Chief to concentrate on this spiritual exercise. This is deducible from the fact that the cheeks puff-up, drawing the mouth into an uncharacteristic look; that of the dead. There is absolutely nothing about the Chief's face, nor the faces of any of his lieutenants, that is communicating a feeling of merriment. The reason for this is probably because it is generally believed that, on this occasion, several of the Chief's detractors may be trying through magic to cast a spell on him or even to kill him. To avert this catastrophe, the Chief prepares for this ceremony by submitting to the thorough immersion in the protective potions. This may explain the presence of the weird looking figure at the left, handing a staff to the Chief before he does his rounds and meets his subjects. The claim that the sinister figure is the spiritual adviser and chief's medicine-man is given credence by the unique treatment deployed by the artist in his representation. Despite his being the closest to the artist and the viewer, a perspective which should indicate that he is a favored person, he, nevertheless, is smallish and frail, in contrast to the other figures in the work who are solidly built. Ekwenchi sustains the viewer's interest in this character by using the element of repetition and contrast. There
seem to be other figures behind the medicine-man, whose features are not
discernible. Could this be his aura, or possibly some spirit beings
complimenting his protective role to the Chief?

The other members of the cast in the royal drama are reflective of the
general atmosphere, that of foreboding. They are rigid and seem to be
apprehensive of what lies ahead, as the Ofala Festival progresses. The prime
minister, the figure immediately to the right of the chief, seems to be
whispering a piece of advise to this pensive leader, who appears to be torn
between accepting the staff being offered to him, and just turning around and
leaving the arena. What appears to be a gesture of intolerance is suggested
by the chief’s fan, which appears to be pressed against the chest of the prime
minister in a hold-your-peace fashion.

The figure at the far left brings a special interest to this work; that of
movement, visual movement. He is the only figure in the work that is in
motion, having just walked in from beyond the format of the relief. He looks
like one in a hurry, with an urgent message for the chief. While the figure at
the distant right watches the medicine-man closely as if suspicious of him, the
figure behind and to the right of the chief looks at the approaching man with a
definite air of expectancy.

Though this work appears in high enough relief, the introduction of the
wavy lines and the ripples at the top create a sense of push and pull that
enhances the dynamism of the work, providing both sufficient balance and
stability. Also contributing to the stability, especially by neutralizing the feeling of top-heaviness inspired by the tusks, is the heaviness of the costumes; e.g., the loin cloths whose volumes have not been weakened by the cutting out of folds.

It is, however, noteworthy that in spite of the absence of an air of festivity, this work suggests rather very strongly a sense of harmony and strength, within an atmosphere that is constituted by visible and invisible elements. These elements are both visual and conceptual, both negative and positive spaces. Also contributing to this orchestra is the shadow cast created by the varying degrees of grooves cut out to create the forms. This phenomenon gives the work a definite sense of three dimensionality.

Obiajulu Ekwenchi, who stands head and shoulders above his peers in portraiture and composition, by means of an most bewildering dynamism has experimented with and succeeded in presenting a sculpture as if it were a painting, with all the dynamics of perspective, three dimensionality, proportion and balance. The Skokianness of this work is not questionable, even though the figures do not appear as realistic as the portraits of Mohammed and Adesoji by Barber or the Chained Man, by Nwokocha. The theme or motif is derived from an African tradition. Elements of the composition show definite setting; human proportions are true to life; there is evidence to believe that the artist had studied real human models for his work; and there is evidence that he was trained formally or informally. All these convincing and overwhelming
Artistic qualities in the work readily present it as Skokian style work.

**Queen Amina of Zaria**

Ben Ekanem

Fondu fiber glass, Life Size

**Figure 2.8**

This is a life-size equestrian sculpture of the famed and almost mythical warrior, *Queen Amina of Zaria*. Here, the many stories about her immense beauty, but especially her military capabilities and accomplishments have been knitted into a monument, a kind of shrine for the admirers and worshippers of this goddess of war. The statue emphasizes dynamism and faithful realism hardly surpassed in contemporary Nigerian art, by my estimation.

In this historic presentation of Queen Amina, the sculptor depicts one of the many climaxes in the warrior-queen’s exploits; the celebration after a successful routing of the enemy. The fleet-footed horse, whose speed and maneuverability may have facilitated its rider’s victories, seems to be in a joyous mood too. In this celebration mood, the queen throws up her right hand holding her lethal weapon in a gesture that speaks so loudly, *veni vidi vici* (I came; I saw; I conquered), while the horse, reflecting her spirit, throws its forelegs into the air. Unlike the painting of the same theme by Emokpae, (fig. 3.11) presenting the queen as a superhuman, a goddess of war, Ekanem, despite Amina’s overwhelming accomplishments and accolades, presents her,
visually, as a smallish woman, devoid of any real merit as a warrior.

In the work under review, Queen Amina sits squarely on the horse, her knees pulled up, parallel with the diagonal incline of the horse, ready to absorb the shock should the animal decide to land on all fours. She looks as if she is perching at the back, and apparently at the mercy of this magnificent beast that dwarfs her size. Despite her diminutive size against the animal, the Queen dominates the horse by sheer force of character rather than size. Her total authority over the situation is established.

The exuberant posturing of both horse and rider silhouetted against the sky convey an overwhelming image of power, authority, and grandeur. The horse's powerful muscles are drawn taut by its acrobatic stance, arching its back, and pulling up its forefeet into synchronized geometric forms. It looks as if it is trying to shake off its rider. As the horse looks ahead, pulling back its stout neck in the attitude of a spitting cobra, Amina in her joyous mood turns her head fully to face the viewer, her trunk twisted into a three-quarter view.

The face in this present work is unlike Amina's face in Emokpae's painting. In this rendition, the queen with a cheek-full of laughter appears to be inviting all and sundry to celebrate her accomplishments. The puffed up cheeks, contributing to a proud countenance, thoroughly betrays the fact that this warrior queen is human. Her long neck is, typically, an exclusively and selectively conferred feature bestowed on women of immense beauty. Her feminine attributes define her shape, even with the cloth covering.
Symbolically, the statue is mounted on an amorphous base; a mock ruin of the city of the enemy of Queen Amina. The symbolic, ruined city is constructed with geometric and organic forms with detailed walls. The entire compact statue, resting precariously on the hind legs of the horse just at the tip of the slope, cuts through the blue space against which it is mounted. The only negative spaces are created by the tail and folded legs of the beast, which have formed triangular shapes.

The viewer is able, at the first glance, to behold the artist's concern for movement, and the stress and strain of human and animal in times of great jubilation. The success of the work is further secured by the contrast struck between the attitudes of man and animal. The eye is made to move along the directional lines that guide them from the queen to the beast in a continuous flow.

The sculpture is finished matte; therefore, it does not allow for the sun's reflection that would have helped to create illusory depths, i.e., to emphasize the various existing depths and shapes. It is evident that the artist had sought for and captured the most dramatic moment of this celebration. What he has not done is freeze it because he intends for the viewer to see in their minds' eye a continuum of the action performed by the horse and rider. This work reveals the cynamism that is captured in a work as a result of the convergence of western European realistic art technique and a Nigerian motif.

SUMMARY
The place and viability of the Theory and Characteristic of Skokian art style, including the durability of the values (Artistic and Aesthetic) in determining the style, have been tested and firmly established in the analyses of the sculpted figures designated Skokian. It has further confirmed the need of perseverance and diligence in the study of contemporary African/Nigerian Skokian art. It is possible that sometimes works that look Skokian because they have some artistic values have been adjudged Kuntu or Awo style by a trained or enlightened viewer/scholar. Because the Skokian artist is looking at and drawing what he sees, he also records some medical/physical deformity. This could be done in such a way that one could mistake it for abstraction. A good example of this possibility in this chapter would be Adult Education. There had been an argument as to whether this presentation was not more mannerist (that is to say, mildly abstracted) than realistic. The argument against realism looked at the entire frame of the man, or its presentation. It was then observed that the limbs are unusually long. The opinion in favor of Skokian, based its argument upon the fact that: 1) The artist had indicated that he spent one sketch pad during his studies before the execution of the work; and 2) The limbs are actually proportionate with the rest of the body. Upon closer study, it was discovered that the false proportion resulted from the fact that the horizontal base visually exaggerated the actual length of the figure’s legs.

Though the sculpted works analyzed are different in theme, media, etc.,
they are related by their being a blend between Western European realistic technique and African culture. They were all produced by artists who had received formal Academic training, who presented the works as closely to nature as far as the human mind, and his hand could go, having been created from some sort of human models, animate or inanimate. They are set in an African environment. Finally, their motifs or themes are derived from African tradition. Individually, their Artistic values greatly outnumbered the Aesthetic values.
CHAPTER 3

SKOKIAN PAINTING

Though Chapter 2 very successfully tested the Skokian principles, its 12 Ideal characteristics, and Values, and established their dependability. It is in Skokian painting that the actual beauty of the theory and its manifesting characteristics and domineering Artistic values over Aesthetic values is more convincingly attested to. Skokian paintings also allow for the application of the Skokian Sub-styles which delineate the inhabited and uninhabited-inhabited canvasses, the animate and inanimate presence.

Three very distinct forms of Skokian sub-styles that will be represented in this chapter are: Skomumuo (Man-Spirit centered) which designates paintings in which there is a spiritual quality contributed by the presence of animate and inanimate forms or elements; SkoMuntu (Man-centered) which designates those works that are predominated by the figure or figures of man; and Skoomuo (Spirit-centered) which applies to those works that exhibit mere land or sea seascapes without any significant presence of animate forms.

The three sub-styles named above manifest in two principal forms;
Absolutes and Relatives. In Absolute situations, if a painting of a landscape is composed with only inanimate forms, i.e., devoid of every human or animal form, the painting is said to be Skomuo. If a painting is a blend of animate and inanimate forms, it is designated Skomumuo, and paintings that feature only human or animal forms, are designated Skomuntu (Odita, 1991). Odita's Map of Knowledge, 360o. Article. p.26).

In relative situations, none of the sceneries are completely devoid of other elements, but can be predominated by either the animate or inanimate forms. When a party to this coexistence is insignificant, the painting, though designated by the name of the predominant element, or party, is not pure and is, therefore, only relative.

Narrative Series

This series includes three paintings that can, and do individually exist as independent works. Their relationship stems from the fact that they all are parts of a whole. They are titled and presented in this order; The City Gate, The City, and Mai Goje or The Guitar Player. In the series, the artist carefully leads one through the typical city gate common in the northern part of Nigeria, and into the city. Within the City, a great gathering of people stands around sharing stories just before the entrance into a celebration. It is here that Mai Goje is encountered as he entertains. When the individual stories (paintings) are assembled as in a jig-saw puzzle, an interesting pictorial narrative is
realized.

Chudi Igboanugo had his initial training at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu between 1984-1986 and graduated with a diploma in Fine/Applied Arts. He transferred to the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to continue his training. In 1989 he graduated, majoring in sculpture with minors in mosaic and wall decoration. At graduation, Igboanugo was hired by the Ibadan Polytechnic to teach drawing and sculpture in the Department of Fine Art. He is presently an active artist and art dealer. He also organizes exhibits and private viewing for individual collectors and corporate clients. He has successfully exhibited both in Nigeria and abroad. The paintings that have been chosen for this work were among those exhibited recently in Minnesota, in the United States. The artist, in a statement published in the brochure of his exhibit titled, Images Of My Mind, commented on his role in the society:

Using art as my medium, I'm able to keep alive my cultural heritage... Each work of art is in a class of its own, as each piece tells a different story about its people, its culture...

The artist said that the exhibit "is an intimate journey into the world that he comes from, a world abundant in rich cultures."

It is important to understand that Igboanugo's emphasis on culture as his source of inspiration is shared by all Nigerian artists, the Skokian artist inclusive. Some readers who understand Nigeria's major ethnic groups and their cultures, and this includes ethnic names, would be puzzled by the artist's statement about the paintings representing an intimate journey into the world
that he comes from. This is because the artist is *Igbo* while the works he rendered are all based on his experiences among the *Hausa/Fulani*, who dominate the northern part of Nigeria. However, with respect to the world he comes from, the artist was simply saying that his work is rooted in Nigerian/African culture.

In choosing to document his people's dying cultures, Igboanugo saw no other style more appropriate than Skokian. This is because the accuracy of the style in capturing nature makes it the most accepted and most effective artistic vehicle in communicating one's impressions to the whole range of peoples in his community. However, if the themes that Igboanugo treated had been done in the Kuntu or Awo(abstract) style, generations not yet born would not be able to make sense of what is being communicated.

The chosen works will, therefore, help us to fully appreciate Skokian style, its principles and values, and its place in contemporary Nigeria.

*The City Gate*

Chudi Igboanugo

Sawdust, glue, oil on panel, 4.5ft x 5.5ft, 1995

Figure 3.1

In the painting, *The City Gate* (fig.3.1), the artist exhibits his convincing understanding of the Skokian theory and all its principles or characteristics. This familiarity with the Skokian style is seen both in the detailing of animate
and inanimate objects as well as in the general atmosphere of the painting. The painting belongs to the Skomumuo, man-spirit centered sub-group of the Skokian style.

The great arched gateway, reminiscent of both the historic head gear of the bust-pendant worn by the Oba of Benin, (a replica of which served as the FESTAC 1977 symbol) and of the triumphal arches of the Romans, with all their architectural accomplishments, lets us into the city that lies within the walls. The walls are built with huge boulders, which suggest, at a glance, their protective role as a fortress against intruders and aggressors. With this understanding in mind, the artist has used an interesting gradation of greenish blue and murky black on the stones, to further accentuate the feeling of strength. The magnificence of the Gate is heightened to exaggeration when its size is compared with that of the figures in front of it and behind it.

Outside the gate, a female trader exhibits her goods in the shade of a now bare tree trunk, completely shorn of its leaves by the dry winds from the Sahara desert. The manicured tree, reminiscent of the ones that Enwonwu was exposed to, now looks like a piece of sculpture. The artist used this dually, both as multiple diagonals and as verticals, interacting with the curvilinear form of the gate. This interaction pitches the two linear forms against each other, thereby intensifying their geometric qualities. The female trader is included as a counterbalance for the figures at the right of the painting,
Directly opposite the tree and across the approach to the gate are rocks of various sizes and shapes that have been positioned for people to sit on. Sometimes in the place of stones, tree trunks are used to provide adequate resting places at the village squares or forums. These places also serve as a meeting arena where discussions are held. In some communities, especially among the traditional Igbo and Yoruba, those smooth stones could be shrines, or altars, which are usually located outside the city gates. There, propitiation and sacrifices are made on behalf of the entire village to obtain favors from the gods after whom the shrines were built. However, this practice is uncommon among the Moslem Hausa/Fulani.

In the painting under review, a question arises as to the functions of the stones in this instance. If the stones are provided as seats, why is the group, gathered at the right side of the Gate, standing? At a glance, it could be inferred that the couples, who seem to come from different cultural backgrounds, are taking leave of one another after an afternoon's get-together. A closer look at the picture does reveal a possibility that, but for the couple standing together, the other figures are individuals on their own personal missions. The distances between the pregnant woman in red and the man in green does not support the inference that they are husband and wife. The figure in red seems to be interested in having a dialogue with the trader, whose raised hands suggest that she is making a point, offering an explanation, or simply attracting the attention of the group to her wares.
The artist's ability to convince the viewer as to the genders of the tiny figures against a dark background of related colors is a demonstration of the Skokian artist's immense understanding of the human form and of their ability to copy it. Each figure has its distinct gender and ethnic characteristics. This was realized through the utilization of good drawing skills, great understanding of the various cultures of Nigeria, and masterly application of colors. The artist shows more than a casual familiarity with Chiarascuro; light and dark. All are characteristics of the Skokian art style.

A viewer's gaze is guided through the arched city gate into the inner quarters, which are quite visible from without the main City Gate. What captivates a viewer's imagination is the drastic contrast of colors, between the greenish-blue iron-firm wall of the gate and the interior which portrays a sun-drenched ambiance dominated by rectilinear and curvilinear shapes. The artist, who appears to be a master of contrasts, continues to seek a reasonable balance in the painting. He does this through the meshing of the perpendicularly of the figures and houses in the city, and the 'horizontality' of the rooftops. In this way, he brings them into harmonious contrast, in an interesting way, with the horizontal shadows of the City Gate.

Chudi Igboanugo intentionally dulled colors only to let in a sudden burst of brightness to create a kind of antagonism. This type of extreme sharp contrast heightens the sense of dynamism and vitality in his work. Going into the painting from the foreground immediately behind the picture frame, a
viewer observes that the work is actually arranged systematically so that the bright and dark areas would alternate, a sort of subtle zebra crossing. This creates an alternating rhythm where stronger beats alternate with weaker ones, resulting in a lyrical tempo in the painting.

The technical skills and draughtsmanship of the artist allowed him to play with the eyes and mind of the spectator. He tilts the picture plane towards us and, through a successful representation of the linear and atmospheric perspective, creates the feeling of stable objects on a tilted ground. This technique serves his never-ending interest in exciting the visual senses beyond common limits.

In the City Gate, Igboanugo captured the spirit of simultaneity in storytelling, having successfully told three different and possibly unrelated stories on the same format. He echoes, in principle, Massacio's **Tribute Money**, and exhibits the limitless possibilities open also to the Skokian artist in the rational representation of the world of reality.

**The City**

Chudi Igboanugo

Water color Size: 14 x 18 inches

**Figure 3.2**

Beyond the great *City Gate* (fig. 3.1), residents and visitors walk several yards to get to the city proper, seen through the first picture and amplified in
second, *The City* (fig. 3.2).

What is most exciting about this painting is the general layout of the design in a diagonal within a rectangular format, with the artist viewing the scenery from a point about the height of the *City Gate*. This inference is lent credence by the undulating ground level from the middle ground which holds the building towards the foreground occupied by the human beings. It terminates at the picture frame beyond the visible format. *The City* appears built on a slope, probably a hillside, features that are common in the Northern part of Nigeria predominated by the Hausa/Fulani.

In this painting, this Skokian artist carries his creative ability in contrasting forms and colors to a new level. He pitches the perfect verticals against horizontals, and positive or concrete objects against their shadows and negative spaces. In pursuit of even more dramatic contrast, the artist also creates a push and pull between the verticals and other perpendicular-looking forms that have been slanted even slightly as they move skywards. This feature is better illustrated with the tallest structures in the painting which look like perfect squares with parallel lines at the base but taper upwards as in a pyramid. Thus, as squares and rectangles work out some harmony, the arch of the gate and the geometric and organic shapes blend to create a picture that is also heard as music.

Miss Lillian, a church pianist, boasted that she could translate the painting into a song. All one needs to do she said is to, "study the boldness of
the forms, their varieties and their extremities. Observe also in your chorus their cooperative shadows, in their varieties, in their strengths, and their weaknesses." Miss Lillian agrees with this writer that the structures in the painting, with the projections at the four angles, "look more like supplicating Moslems facing Mecca, saying that those gestures give the painting some sort of celestial or spiritual feeling."

The Skokian artist's keen sense of observation of nature, and his ability to reproduce the same, is evidenced here by Igboanugo's presentation of the silhouette of the distant buildings untouched by the light. It is amazing how the artist has sandwiched the three dimensional structures between the silhouette and the shadow, thereby accentuating their three-dimensional quality. The silhouettes in the background assume an ethereal quality, appearing as 'spiritual' entities, given a fleeting form, as they are currently being translated from earth into eternity.

It is not immediately clear why the artist has again here, as in the City Gate, paid less attention to the human forms, but rather concentrated on the inanimate forms of the architectural structures. Though he paid less attention to human form, he has labored to give human attributes to inanimate forms; an intense form of contrast. This Skomuntu sub-style of Skokian, can further be designated Relative Skomuntu. This is because, although there is visible animate presence, it is not substantial, being drastically suppressed by the towering presence of the inanimate forms.
Small and large groups of people standing within the inner premises convey a true image of the actual scenes being represented here. It is not uncommon to see a throng of poor people in Hausa communities gather outside the home of a wealthy man to receive benevolence in alms and food. Considering the rather large group in attendance, one would think that something more like a religious or cultural ceremony is taking place. To help the viewer understand that the setting is within northern Nigeria, Igboanugo presents the scenery the way it is in reality, without any vegetation.

Because of the general feeling of foreboding pervading The City, the painting could be categorized as Skomuo since the human elements are insignificant compared to the large structures, which seem to be the artist's main interest.

As the spectators walk through the second gate and into the city proper, they come face to face with a great celebration with a variety of food and music, and to get into the feasting area, one passes by the principal music player, Mai Goje, armed with a traditional guitar.

_Mai Goje (The Guitar Player)_

Chudi Igboanugo

Glue polyfiller acrylic on panel, 21/2ft x 3ft

_Figure 3.3_

In the painting under review, titled Mai Goje or Guitar Player fig. 3.3),
Igboanugo escorts the spectator into the picture through a window that he had created beyond the picture plane. It is within this space that he tells his story. Notice that the artist does not leave the borders bare, but has reflected the dominant colors of the painting, greenish-blue and creams, oranges and browns onto it.

The most imposing figure, the *Mai Goje* or Guitar Player, is positioned on the foreground, more to the left side of the painting with his back against the vertical support, not visible in the picture. The right leg runs in a diagonal at right angle with the southern border of the picture space, while the left leg is pulled up at the knee to act as support for the instrument and the player’s left elbow. The right hand, which plucks the strings, seems squared in alignment with the left foot, and describes the same angle. Acting as support, the left hand holds the *goje*, or guitar stem and plays the keys. The figure seems somewhat completely isolated from the group by the dark shadows that surround him, but which do not affect the other figures in the painting as much. The artist prevents what would have been complete severance of the player from the rest of the celebrants, by bridging the gap with the stem of the guitar. In this way, he is able to carry the light hues of creams and yellows, sharing them effectively over the entire right portion of the painting, which is washed by the suffused lighting.

The foreground and middle ground are tightly packed with figures, and leaves insufficient breathing room in the painting. The absence of a distinctive
value gradation between the three grounds, especially to the left side of the painting, gives the impression of a space advancing towards the spectator. The same impression is conveyed by the three dimensional objects; a communication that mellows down the three dimensionality of the painting and creates a visual tension between the background and the foreground. This rift gives the work a subtle, or tamed dynamism. The painting is devoid of any significant drama.

Given the absence of obvious dynamism in a painting of a celebration, the questions that arise here are, what is this crowd doing, and why has a musician been called to a ceremony where the invitees do not smile, a place that is pervaded by an air of mourning? The musician plays reluctantly, appearing to hate every note he strikes. He plays to a group of celebrants, who, themselves, seem not obliged to show any gratitude. There is no excitement shown, not even by the lady off centered in the middle ground who is bearing an object overflowing with food.

Although there is no convincingly dramatic incident represented here, e.g., nothing in the way of an anecdote; the artist, however, captured an atmosphere commonly experienced in refugee camps. It is at such places that one encounters people of some consequence who have been stripped of their wealth and power by circumstances beyond their control. In this way, they are reduced to glorified beggars. This type of people live from day to day, by the grace of charitable people or organizations.
Miss Lillian, quoted earlier, said that the painting should more correctly be titled, "Melancholy of the Celebrants" or more appropriately, "David Plays for a Melancholic Saul expecting the spear to be hurled at him". She was referring to the Bible story about David who was commissioned by King Saul, controlled by a malign spirit. It is strange that this painting, with its dashing brush strokes and dabs, does not stir the spirit or inspire celebration. What seems to be the artist's greatest success in this painting is his technique of color application. Igboanugo's palette is usually dictated by the geographical location of the scenery and object to be represented. Out of the natural soil and vegetation of the given area, he gives us a patch work of colors applied as if stating, I am a Skokian artist with a sound knowledge of color theory. He, still being directed by the reality before him, applies the colors in dabs and dashes, broken and faceted. Mai Goje appears stiff and rigid, as if his costumes were cut out of aluminum foil, a factor that may have contributed to the lack-luster quality of the scene. Though the muted light challenges and nearly destroys a convincing three dimensionality in the work, it does not completely sacrifice its sense of depth.

Even in exercising the attributes of dynamic Skokian, the artist did not lose the sensitivity towards the feelings of the peoples in his community. These are the ones who would form the greater percentage of his clientele, and, because of the Skokian style used, every member of the community will benefit from a work of art that is derived primarily from their environment.
The three works in the series, *The City Gate, The City,* and *Mai Goje* by Chudi Igboanugo conform to the Theory, the characteristics and the artistic values as expected of a Skokian style work. Although they share a common fleeting Skomuo ambiance, those are minimal and negligible as they are overpowered by the overwhelming presence of *Artistic values.* The themes are derived from an African tradition; There is evidence of the use of models, animate and inanimate; The general presentation validates the fact that the artist received formal academic training—the linear and aerial perspective is breathtaking; The artist's understanding of color theory as this is taught in colleges is convincing; Three dimensionality is achieved; and the Light source is uni-directional.

This Skokian artist has produced paintings which, despite their insignificant trespasses into the realm of intuition, belong firmly in the Skokian style realm.

*Crucifix; Philosopher, Critic & Poet*

Nsikak Essien, 1984

Colored pencils on cardboard 1'.5" X 1'

**Figure 3.4**

Figure 3:4 is a portrait of *Crucifix,* rendered by one of the most respected newbreed artists. It is done with colored pencils, and completed in 25 minutes. This painting has been chosen for analysis to prove that the
Skokian artist is not only a mirror of nature, but an artist who sees beyond it. The joy of it is that whatever he beholds he represents as closely as possible to nature. The subject was captured in the heat of a creative enterprise as he withdraws into his office, mid way through a tragic/comedy production. It is important to follow, and to understand how the artist has gone beyond the thoughts of the man, to capture his disposition, and produce the same in a typical Skokian style.

Nsikak Essien was born on December 20, 1957 at Uyo, but his hometown is Ifa Atai, Uyo in the Cross River State of Nigeria. He attended Wesley Primary School, Port Harcourt, and later Government School, Ifa Atai, where he did part of his high school education. This was completed between 1970 and 1974 at Holy Child Family College, Abak. He received a Higher National Diploma in Fine Arts after a successful completion of his art training at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu between 1975-1979. For his National Youth Service assignment, he taught at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. His effectiveness as an art teacher earned him permanent employment as a lecturer in 1980 after his youth service.

Essien's creativity and ingenuity cannot be exaggerated because his achievement speaks for itself. He has held a one-man exhibition and has joined in many group shows, nationally and internationally. His acceptance by the AKA Group of Exhibiting Artists, one of the foremost of contemporary art
organizations in Nigeria, is a testimony to his creative energy and versatility. He has successfully exhibited with AKA since its inauguration in 1986. The loudest testament to this artist's fecundity is not only his many works that are in private and corporate collections but by the landmark painting he was commissioned to execute for the Presidential guest House at Abuja, the then newly created Capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This project received favorable preview and review by the media and individual art critics. Essien who is a sculptor/painter, creates four types of artworks: total painting; total sculpture; mixed media in both; and also what he calls sculptural painting. With this technique, he uses actual wax, glue or other soft media that harden when dried, to construct his figures as in bas relief in sculpture. He only uses light and shade as a secondary element to accentuate the impression of three dimensionality that has already been communicated. Essien is married and has three children. His hobbies include Bible reading.

The artist's statement in the AKA 87 exhibition catalogue tells vividly of Essien's indefatigable experimentation: "Nothing quite beats that thumping of the heart when I am contemplating a "Virgin" forest, knowing the adventure it will afford me in my process of breaking 'her'. My search for a 'perfect' artform is still on; if "arriving" means getting stuck in the rut of one particular style, then the search is forever" (AKA 87,p.41).

In figure 3.4, the three quarter view portrait under review, the artist unmistakably established his main interest, the face, a piece of landscape that
we have come to know so well because it is so important to us. In fact, it is the center of our entire emotional life (Fagin, 1990, p.8). The face, seems to be able to mirror even the thoughts of one’s mind, which is the reason why Essien’s main goal in this portrait was to capture the mind of his unsuspecting ‘sitter’ at the peak of his performance; creating a piece of poetry. The subject was unaware of the painter during the period of approximately twenty five minutes that it took to produce the portrait. This is a testimony to the Skokian artist’s power of observation, and also to his ability to record accurately what he observed within a short period of time.

The artist positions the three quarter view face slightly off-center, and filling the entire format. He allows a negative space at the left but occupies the other areas with a variety of barbs and darts; some blunt and fuzzy, while others are sharp and crisp. In his concentration, the subject’s afro-hair style, which the artist admired very much, did not seem to matter now as all efforts are directed at capturing the very depths of the philosopher/poet’s mind. Initial movement is suggested by the forward incline of the head and accentuated by the mostly diagonals of a variety of thickness, colors and lengths. The sense of animation/agitation communicated by the light is toned down remarkably to the left where the artist settles down to define the physiognomy. At this point, the strokes become shorter and more compact, and as the colors become thicker and denser, a sense of depth is realized. This element is emphasized further by the shadow cast as a result of the intense light flooding the left side
of the face from a strong light source. The contrast between the left and right sides of the picture in texture, detailing, light intensity, and movement is easily noticeable.

Essien introduces the zigzag strokes, hatches and cross-hatching, to suggest a sophisticated series of electric impulses being radiated from the mind of the poet. A viewer renamed the painting, 'Crucifix in the 7th Heaven.' By that, she meant that in the state of mind that the sitter was, he could not possibly be conscious of the activities going on around him.

Essien states the essence of this painting with admirable force and clarity: The artist, dissatisfied with the inability of the face to attract a viewer's attention to itself, uses lines of force emanating from outside the picture format, both top and bottom, to forcibly pull the eyes, and guide them to the face. The lines converge at a point looking like a giant arrow. It is this opposing lines of force pushing against the face from the right and left respectively that create the secondary feeling of movement. The overwhelming right to left force forces the head into a forward incline. However, further sloping of the head is resisted by the left to right force which teams up with the shadow to withstand the onslaught. It is this counterbalancing of the forces that animated the portrait, thus creating the sense of urgency experienced in the work. The artist's unquestionable understanding of colors helped him to spread them out, thus, preventing the boredom of too much sameness and the chaos of uncontrolled variety.

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It is amazing how, throughout the painting, Essien integrated colors not necessarily with the intention of reproducing only what his eyes saw, but also in representing what the mind knew to be there. The forehead is treated in a way suggesting its prominence in the activity going on in the mind of the subject. In the center of the forehead, immediately above the eyes, the artist represents what is believed in his culture, to be the core of reasoning, what most people call the third eye. He terminates the blue color advancing from the right, and creates an area of high light, toned down to a deep cream. By contrasting with the adjoining areas, its effectiveness is further heightened by the darkened portion of the hair and cast shadow. The eyes which do not play any vital role in thinking are completely shaded-in under the pair of reading glasses. All one can see through the glasses are areas of very deep shadow which, at a concentrated gaze, begin to take the shape of human eyes.

Though the eyes are not discernible, the mind, or the viewer's imagination nails them in place. The pair of glasses could not have been better treated. Their left arm is unidentifiable under the intense light, having been 'dissolved' by it. The nose, emerging from the dark areas of the eye and glasses, receives the light by virtue of its raised nature and not by its importance in realizing the goal of the painter. It immediately slopes into the mouth region, the mustache leading, with its dark hair represented with short black strokes. The painting features primary colors that have combined to create secondaries, and secondaries that have blended into other colors to produce tertiarles and
complimentary colors. In this way, the viewer is drawn into a tapestry as colors—more than the rainbow can account for—wherein each color contributes significantly to the success of the work. The borders of the pouted typical African lips are not discernible but could be constructed by the viewer's mind following his/her knowledge of its natural position.

Urgency in this portrait is not only communicated by the variety of agitated hanging strokes, as the artist tried to capture many states of mind in one painting, but, is also communicated through colors and other elements; both visual and conceptual. This is not the type of portrait that looks at the viewer since the artist's sole interest was in the activity of the mind and not necessarily the forms of the body or its textile coverings. In this painting, those would have been distractions, since Essien, like most dynamic Skokian artists, especially portraitists, paid most attention to the personality and psychic state of the subject.

It is not hard to see in this work, the ability of the Skokian artist to weave realism and intuition into one fabric, yet communicating a strong sense of the realistic. Though the tones are muted, the tactile quality of the work is determined by the sharp parallel diagonals intersecting at different areas to create cross-hatches. This technique of presentation was not arbitrary, but thought out by the artist to represent the subject whom he considered spontaneous, volatile, and hyperactive.

The background, at the first glance, would appear blank. It is not
neutral as seen in portraits, but it echoes and reflects the general dynamic atmosphere pervading the entire work. There are no landscapes in the background to support the work, but there is a presence which prevents the portrait from 'falling over'. The treatment of the background in a coalition of hues helps to define the figure that lays against its own shadow and partially depends upon it for its three dimensionality. General illumination or brightness of the work couples with its unfinished look to reflect the enlightenment that the philosopher/critic supplies, and also to reflect the never ending process of discovering or unearthing of the unknown that he is involved with.

_Crucifix; Poet and Critic_ has more depth than one realizes at a glance. A closer look will reveal that the artist has surrounded the subject with large areas of environment, criss-crossed by lines of various thickness and angles. By displaying deep space at the background and shallow foreground, the artist created a contrast that gives the portrait a sense of dynamism. After studying the work critically Boni Okafor, a contemporary Nigerian super-realist, an artist that uses Skokian in his paintings of super-realist subjects said that: "Although Essien seemed to have rendered this portrait impatiently, and immersed it completely in an atmosphere that could be called chaotic, the paradox seems to be that the intensity, the dignity, and the solemnity of the subject remain profound. Has not the unfinished state of the painting given it a feeling of the eternal, a continuing process" (IMT, Enugu, 1984)?

An attentive viewer will see enough in this portrait to describe it as an
image of rapt meditation, whose mood represents the "rigid attitude of a
devotee utterly unaware of his surrounding and mystically in contact with God".
Essien has, in this work, given us, not just a metaphor, but a pure
personification of the intense and involving duties of the philosopher/poet/critic.
He has shown his understanding of the human anatomy, and exhibited that
power of great portraitists to penetrate the form in search of the thought and
meaning. He has, in this presentation, used colors and technique to express,
not so much a fanatical observation of nature, but a masterful understanding
and exploitation of it.

*Crucifix; Philosopher. Poet and Critic* is a painting that was created
based on the Skokian principles, but which recognizes the unlimited
possibilities open to a *dynamic* Skokianist. Some of the possibilities let him
look beyond the natural appearances of colors. Like the rayonists, he
understands that all objects reflect light and therefore their colors onto other
objects in their environment.

**Oseakwa At Noon**

Pius Fab Nnubia

Oil on Canvas. 1993

**Figure 3.5**

The primary motif in this horizontally oriented painting (fig. 3.5) is a
variety of aluminum roofed buildings placed to the left of the format and
extending slightly to the right past the center. The picture plane features three discernible sections; the foreground which is the trough holding the water, the middle ground in which the activities in the painting are concentrated, and the background which, but for images projected upon it by the mind, is bare, exhibiting the skies that appear aglow with the intense noon sunlight.

*Oseakwa at Noon* vividly illustrates the *Skomumuo* sub-style of the Skokian style but leans more to the *Skomuo* sub-style by virtue of the insignificant animate presence in the painting.

The artist's power of observation of nature is vastly testified to and his Skokian instinct, which includes the ability to represent nature close to itself is undoubtable. Also manifest in this painting is the artist's ability to get beyond the rigid *authentic* Skokian style in order to generate aesthetic interest through the expression of his personal emotion in his work. He has communicated to us, the viewers, his nostalgic feelings about that area of his village that holds so much memory and that still excites a lot of emotional attachment.

The organization of the pictorial space is governed by the use of perspective recession, based on linear and atmospheric perspective. The artist arranged the houses across the picture plane at the very edge of the water, and accentuated that plane by closing off pictorial depth through the use of such devices as houses, a back area of shadows, and neutral colors. Nnubia deployed atmospheric effects in the background to emphasize linear contours. In *Oseakwa At Noon*, the artist did not use the single point perspective, but
achieved his perspective by using atmosphere in such a way that the vanishing 'point' becomes a stretch along the horizon, and not a point. This unique type of application of multiple perspective—both aerial (atmospheric) and linear—contributed to the feeling that the artist's view of the scenery was aerial. However, it is true that the artist actually painted the scene from an opposite hillside to the right of the painting. It is this hill and the one in the background that create the valley through which the river Ulasi represented in the painting runs. From that vantage position, the artist captured the entire community, a feat that would have been impossible if he had painted it from the ground level.

If an uninformed observer looks at the picture under review from the authentic or Veristic Skokian perspective, they may classify this painting as non-Skokian because of the liberties that the artist had taken with the eccentricities of the dynamic Skokian artist. The most significant unconventional Skokian element is found in the artist's subtle 'stylizations' and exaggerations, especially in choice of his palette, and the application of his colors. Dynamic Skokian style offers the artist enough room to move around within Skokian style, observing its many intrinsic qualities, including the controlled liberty to sneak into the realm of intuition and the scientific in the design and application of his colors. He understands that under the prism, a tool that nature has 'installed' in the artist's senses, the ray of the sun is broken into the many colors of the rainbow, and more. He is aware of the reflective quality of water, and the fact that the adjoining houses and other objects within
its vicinity are not only mirrored by the water below them. He knew that their reflected colors are in turn thrown back at the sources from which they emanated. What the artist experienced was a criss-crossing of a rainbow of colors which, though not always visible, the artist knew to be there.

In this way, the artist has sketchily represented the human forms, but did it effectively enough to allow for the identification of their age and sexes, and even the activities that they are involved with. Applying the knowledge gained through his study and understanding of a body of water bordered by a variety of colors of houses and vegetation, the artist captured this element so vividly that if fools the eye as to their real presence. He distributed all the colors in their different tones and values, and the result is breathtaking. The houses owned by the fishermen and farmers who inhabit this fertile area of the village are concentrated in the middleground, between the river and the hill. The actual colors of the walls become the dominant ones, even in the face of the onslaught by the reflected colors from the water. The artist reproduced the colors of the walls as they react to the overwhelming illumination by the sun. To communicate the intensity of the sun, at this time of the day, Nnubia could not avoid the temptation to exaggerate. Judging from the position of the sun, one would call the admission of light from the right side of the painting, especially the great illumination of the two houses in the center of the painting, a contradiction. This is not so because the light that is being observed on the walls of the houses comes primarily as a reflection of the sun on the surface of
the water. Using orange and avocado green in their various tonalities, the artist graded values from a distinct umbra and penumbra of the shadows to the areas being blasted by the noontime sun.

Despite the intense sunlight, there is no strong suggestion of the artist's usage of value modulation to create three dimensionality. He instead achieved a form of rounded volumes by delineating the houses with dark lines, an echo of fauvist tendency. The colors are unified and tonal, rather than direct. Fearing a truncated transition from one section or ground of the painting to the other, the artist constructed not only a conceptual connection, but visual ones. The bridge does not only serve to facilitate human crossings, but also carries the eye beyond the water unto the middle ground. This in turn is connected to the background; i.e., to the sky by the three tall palm trees that reach beyond the hills, transversing the sky, and reaching for the borders of the painting. The intention to keep the trees within the format is a positive one since the eye would have been tempted to linger only briefly on the painting before continuing beyond the format along the path of force cut by the trees.

*Portrait of Chief (Dr) Sapara*

Aina Onabolu

**Figure 3.6**

The painting is a centrally positioned seated portrait of Chief Sapara dressed in the traditional Yoruba *agbada*. It is placed in a 3/4 view orientation,
the preferred position for Onabolu’s portraits. The general atmosphere of the painting is as serene as the subject is regal and self-assuring. This feeling is suggested by his posture, but especially by his smile.

Aina Onabolu was born on September 13, 1882 in Ijebu Ode, Nigeria. He was self-taught from 1900-1920. Onabolu was the great pioneer of Nigerian academic painting. He worked in the academic style, which aimed at a technical perfection to convey a convincing image of external reality. He started to practice without any formal training, taking as his subjects landscapes and people. Although he had a clerical job in Lagos, he became increasingly more interested in art, and, in 1920, went to England to study "whatever he could of the European sciences of painting." He believed in the importance of technique that is acquired by "severe academic training and intellectual visual effort" (Oyelola, 1977). Onabolu died in 1963.

In 1922, Aina Onabolu returned to Nigeria after he successfully completed his art training and was awarded his diploma. He took up a teaching position in Lagos secondary schools. It is general knowledge that Onabolu’s greatest works were those done in stern naturalistic styles, especially portraits of the elite. Notable among these are the portraits of Mrs. Spencer Savage (1906, fig. 3.6), a wasp-waisted lady modishly dressed in the European fashion of the period (Oyelola), and The Rt. Rev. D.D.Oluwole (c. 1925, fig. 3.18), presented as a benevolent patriarch of the church, seated in the dark-blue, red and white vestments, with his right hand on the Bible. The portrait of Chief
Sapara, the subject of this analysis, is one of his better known works. Some of his other works are in figure 3.17.

This imposing portrait is arranged to fill the entire picture plane with its physical form as well as with its presence. It extends from the very edge of the frame through the foreground and middle ground, into the background, transversing even the borders of the upper frame. By the cap’s splitting the format that would have contained the subject within the picture plane, the spectator is forced to follow the flow of the cap in an excursion of infinity. The most prominent forms are biomorphic and geometric as in the cap and the floral designs on it, the horse tail, the decoration on the costume, and the partially visible column at the far left of the painting. The negative and positive spaces stand in subtle contrast, complimenting each other without detracting from their roles. For example, though the creams on the costume are echoed on the background, the volume of the subject matter is not diminished, but is sustained by the modulation of values in the construction of the drapery. This gives the work a strong chiaroscuro effect.

Although Chief Sapara is positioned facing left in a three quarter orientation, the face, which is the most animated part of the painting, is turned toward the viewer, his eyes making contact with the spectator as if inviting them to dialogue with him. This is in sharp contrast with the personalities represented in Abayomi Barber’s works; General Murtala Mohammed (fig.2.4), and Oba Aderemi (fig.2.5), respectively. As those seem to look beyond the
spectators in a proud or arrogant manner, Chief Sapara, beaming a friendly
and inviting smile, encourages the viewer into the painting; his world. His face
features the typical Yoruba characteristics encountered in the analysis of Oba
Aderemi; the flayed nose and the fairly prominent cheeks and jaw, evidence of
a good life. His lips, the delieanation of which is not completely discernible,
could not conceal the smile that had filled his cheeks and that is at the brink of
manifestation. The subtle lines flowing from the cap lead us through the head,
after an insignificant break by the left ear, to a stout neck; a bridge between a
voluminous body and small but proportionate head.

The body, in the main, is made up of a large multi-yardage shiny textile,
very much like brocade, the pride and favorite of the rich and famous. The
chest area is heavily and intricately embroidered in silvery and golden colors.
The golden trimmings running horizontally, separates the embroidery from the
rest of the gown. Motifs used in the decoration are sometimes consciously
chosen to emphasize the status and importance of the individual wearing it. In
that sense, they become metaphors and proverbs common to the people, and
are easily understood by them.

The hands are the only other parts of the skin not covered, and they
play a very important role in harmonizing colors and balancing the work. Both
hands rest on the arm-rests of the chair, the right one holding a well manicured
horse tail which adds to the regal atmosphere and importance. Confirming his
understanding and mastery of the intricacies of drawing, this Skokian artist
posed the subject in a way that would necessitate the hands being foreshortened. The diagonal placement of the horsetail also amplifies the seating posture of the subject, and echoes the color of the background, thereby facilitating harmony and balance. It tends to lead our eyes to the column at the far right whose repetition trails into the distance, enhancing the feeling of atmospheric perspective. This lends the work more depth.

It is important to observe how the artist has compensated for the slight difference between the negative spaces to the right and left of the portrait. He has used the column at the left, to claim some of the space, thereby creating a sense of perfect symmetry and visual balance. There is a strong sense of optical illusion in centralizing the subject. The background is devoid of any tangible feature but for the pillar and the impressions of hurried brushstrokes. This arid and sun-drenched background best suits this serene gentleman and his most exquisite costume because of its resonance in the rest of the work. It is surprising that the brightness experienced in the background does not affect the subject, at least, not with half as much intensity. This observation is more pronounced on the face and the lower part of the costume. Here, the source of the illumination is difficult to ascertain. It appears that the feeble flickering light at this point emanates from the horse-tail and the golden and silvery embroideries. Another presence of light is found on the shoulders, where the folds and drapery have been vividly defined.

It is with some degree of difficulty that one determines, not without fear
of equivocation, that the velvety or satiny brocade gown is greenish, with a tinge of Prussian blue. This color contrasts very favorably with the off-white silvery, and gold-tone embroidery to stabilize and unify the painting with its background.

One needs to accept the invitation offered by Chief Sapara to dialogue with it and become part of the painting, to be able to see, in all its ramifications, the creativity and dexterity with which the artist has presented a good spirit and a sensitive man. This is achieved by the way that the artist has positioned his sitter, deployed his colors, and harmonized the elements and principles of a good composition. The low-key colors, not in any way struggling among themselves for individual prominence, agree with the strong chiaroscuro and sfumatic effect in this presentation of a royal client of the artist's.

_Mrs. Spencer Savage_,

Aina Onabolu

Water color, 1906

FIGURE 3.7

This portrait of a lady of the high society was executed by Aina Onabolu in 1906, more than one decade before his formal art training in England. It shows this elegant lady in the fashion of her days, manifesting a consciousness that was determined and defined by her social status.

This painting has been chosen to facilitate better appreciation of the
point being made to the effect that Skokian as a tendency in art, was in existence in Nigeria before Onabolu’s trip to England in 1920, and, secondly, that his diploma, apart from being a psychological incentive, did not in any significant way, add to Onabolu’s versatility. This point will be better served by a comparative analysis (which the scope of this present study cannot accommodate) of the two remarkable paintings by Onabolu, called “two of his dearest ideals” (Oyelola, 1977, p. 86), which show masterly handling of portraiture via oil and water color media, respectively. The paintings are namely, Mrs. Spencer Savage, 1906 and Archbishop Oluwole, 1924 (figure 3: 18).

Mrs. Savage is placed nearly full dorsal view and centered approximately in a symmetrical fashion. Her entire body is slightly turned to the left in the fashion of most of Onabolu’s portraits. She looks away from the viewer as if she was shy or because her attention was momentarily attracted by something beyond the viewer. Her eyes are bright and focused in an introspective way, while the nose, unlike those of the typical Yoruba, is straight, indicating the possibility of her being a hybrid between a Nigerian parent and an expatriate. Mixed marriages at that time appeared to lend more respect to the offspring. The cheeks are puffed not in the attitude of the Gelede mask, but in a way that reflects the trim feature of a lady who is self-conscious and sensitive about her diet. Despite the convincing presence of European ancestry, the lips are slightly pushed out, enough to indicate her African ancestry.
The figure is comfortably relaxed on the object that she is sitting on, her exquisitely well formed body draped with a tight-fitting dress that reveals the very contour of her body. She looks apprehensive, but not agitated, as her pretty face is lit up not with a smile but rather with a rush of light from a subtle source. Also contributing is a suggestion of excitement that she has successfully checked from manifesting into a smile. It was believed then (as still is in some cultures), that aristocrats did not openly show their emotion, as do the ordinary people.

The painting is generally light, so there is no shadow resulting from the light on the sitter's face. Such a shadow would have helped to define the three dimensionality of the figure. However, despite the absence of shadow, the feeling of volume is sensed by the deepening of the background and the casting of the left portion of the format in a faint shadow.

The artist introduced some contrasts to heighten the feeling of stability and solidity; the color of the dark hair is carried further down to the brooch on Mrs. Savages' chest, and even further, to her belt. Thus, one looks at a painting that is balanced by the conflict between dark and light areas.

**Self Portrait**
Akinola Lasekan
Water color, 53x63cm

**FIGURE 3.8**

This youthful water color painting presents a self portrait which conveys Akinola's creative genius. It depicts a young artist who is focused on the
possibilities achievable through his artistic talent. At a glance, the painting looks simple, possessing little commendable qualities as found in the works of great master portraitists. But at a closer study and appreciation, one begins to unravel the masterful marriage of the elements and principles of a good Skokian composition. Other works of the artist would testify very quickly to his vast understanding of the art of portraiture (figs. 3.19 & 20).

Akinola Lasekan, a self-taught Nigerian artist, is a great testimony to the Veristic Skokian style. Lasekan pursued academic realism and painted highly accomplished portraits of Nigerians in traditional costume as well as scenes from rural life. "He presents an idealized picture of humanity where people, glowing with health and beauty, are dignified even further by richly colored costume" (Oyelola, 77, p.88).

This monochromatic painting features an oval face tapering into a blunt chin. It is Lasekan's portrayal of himself on a canvas 53x63cm. The figure is placed slightly off-center, occupying more of the format to the left, thus resulting in more negative space occurring at the right of the picture. The figure is positioned in a little more than 3/4 view. This closed picture is one of the few portraits that did not cut through the upper limits of the picture frame, leaving one with a vital question; Is the space left above his head a symbolic one, suggesting that the artist was already looking ahead to his future growth and greatness? Was the space, therefore, intentional? The peering but introspective eyes of the artist, gazing into the unimaginable future and
possibly trying to fantasize about his place within it, seem to lend credence to this line of thought. Incidentally, the eventual growth and popularity and fame achieved by the artist may support the above interpretation.

The popular winged cap, the fashion of the time, covers the head, fitting very snugly, and covering the entire hair in a fashion similar to those of the Hospital surgery team. It comes to rest, wedged between the head and the ear on each side of the head. At the front, it stops a few centimeters from the eyebrows. Its dorsal ‘fin’, marking the water-shed between light and shadow and acting as a line of force, draws the eyes downwards, through an optical line that transverses the facial features. When the line gets to the neck, it echoes the exact light and shade pattern on the cap, running through the v-shaped slit on the shirt front.

The eyes are presented in a theatrical way to seem as if they are searching, seeking to attract the eyes of the viewer, and at the same time, looking past or through the viewer into the distance. This powerful illusion is created, it appears, by the darkening, or casting into very significant shadow, the bridge between the brows and the eyelids. Further mystery is created by the delineating of the eyelids with black cosmetic pencils. This application contributes to the increase in the contrast between its blackness and the white of the eye. It can then be said that this extensive attention and deliberate detailing of the eye combine favorably with the effect of chiaroscuro to create a feeling that the pair of eyes are actually alive and mobile. A viable feeling of
dynamism is achieved by the artist when some areas of the dark, arched brows, are buried in deep shadow. By doing this, the undefined contours, contrasting with the delineated areas, create some dynamism, through their subtle struggle for prominence.

Uncharacteristically, the nose is fairly long and small, not the typical Yoruba type encountered in the portrait of Chief Aderemi. Also atypical of the Yoruba ethnicity are the lips. The Skokian artist, reaching into his tool box, continues with his delineation of the facial features, this time, lining the upper lip and presenting it as an area of highlight. The moist and glistening lips, which are presented in a sensuous way, could inspire someone with an unpopular sexual orientation, to misread his intention. It is possible that the artist, self-conscious of his beautiful lips, decided to emphasize what he considers his asset; a facilitator of his sex appeal. Finally, the face tapers into a dimpled firm chin, presenting a strong argument against the effeminate physiognomy. Putting a lid on any further inquiry into the subject's sex, the viewer's eyes on their descent recognize the stout, round neck sporting a unique masculine quality; the Adams apple. Therefore, despite the portrait's effeminate look, the subject was a man.

The gown and the cap seem to have been made from the same textile materials, which may have been starched for extra body. Designs are mild and hardly visible, nothing in the range of those found on Chief Sapara's costume. The design is simple; comprised of semi-circular and some short
vertical lines. They have been used as borders for the shirt collar and the split in the middle of the shirt. A hardly discernible floral motif made up of yellow borders and darker brownish dots are symmetrically placed on either side of the shirt.

Although the success of the artist at creating a three dimensional illusion is unquestionable, the monochromatic palette toned down what could have been a work of significant depth. It does appear that the artist did intentionally dissolve the shadows, by creating the studio-type background lighting, which accents the feeling of the background being painted with a dry brush or scratched with a palette knife. This studio-type lighting, incidentally, hyper-illuminates and lightens the background to the point that it is nearly clashing with the subject in value. In this way, it appears to be struggling with the portrait for survival, instead of complimenting it.

The general appearance of the portrait painting is harmonious, approaching the point of monotony. What could have been a Skokian disaster, considering that the three dimensionality would have faded, was saved by a few areas of contrast in the tonality, and value. Despite Lasekan's miserly attitude with colors, having excluded any primaries or secondaries, there is no doubt that this master has captured the very essence in the subject. He even took some liberties with the pardonable excesses of the Skokian art style; going beyond the visual, to search out the mind. The painting testifies to the artist's power of observation, as well as his power of invention.
President Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari
Abayomi Barber
Oil Painting, 183 x 122 cm

FIGURE 3.9

This is a breath-taking naturalistic portrait of the former and first executive civilian President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Shehu Shagari. He is seen here in his signature attire; the immaculate white three-piece danshiki, the Hausa-Fulani version of the Yoruba agbada, topped with a matching cap that signifies the unity of Nigeria. Notice the green white and green colors of the Nigeria national flag. But for a few inches of the costume from the elbows, the figure is mathematically centralized, creating the same amount of negative space on both sides of the subject.

The artist, Abayomi Barber, has been discussed under Sculpture where he contributed two works; Murtala Mohammed (figure 2.4), and Adesoji Aderemi (figure 2.5), respectively.

In the portrait, President Shehu Shagari, Barber seems to be consciously exhibiting his undoubted ability as a Skokian artist to create a sculptural illusion on a two-dimensional surface. Though a simple presentation, considering its limited palette and unsophisticated background (bare but for the blue skies), the artist communicated to the viewers, the image of a living man, fixed onto the canvas, but one who is capable of walking off of it and
dialoguing with them. The painting possesses a certain elevation and
grandeur, a freshness and a brilliancy that amazes but pleases. It testifies very
boldly to this Skokian artist's familiarity with the works of a wide range of art
culture. He is able to synthesize and distill the best elements and
characteristics found in other cultures, including Western technique, and then
crystallize them into one whole striking figure. He does this in such a way that
the dominant influence is unmistakably, the African/Nigerian culture and
tradition.

The portrait which seems to be leaning forward, and slightly toward the
left, is placed on a vertical format, facing the left in the 3/4 orientation, which
seems the preferable position for most portraiture. This format compliments
the gangling stature of the President, giving one the feeling that the portraitist,
who sometimes is obliged to operate as a court artist, is here being generous
with his patron. He has represented Shagari in a picture of exquisite grace and
sophisticated elegance.

At a first glance, the subject's head appears disproportionate with the
rest of the body, which appears attenuated in a way reminiscent of the of the
tall masquerade of Ihiala. The convex edge of the cap compliments the
concave, near circular collar of the costume, cooperating with it to determine
the shape and accent the expression of the bespectacled face. The subject is
looking fixedly and introspectively beyond the format, as the focused eyes
seem buried deep in their sockets, a feeling that is inspired and sustained by
the lenses of the reading glasses. The nose is prominent and long in the manner of the Hausa-Fulani stock, and the lips are significantly small in comparison with those of Chief Aderemi who was Yoruba. There is something effeminate about the prominently long neck which joins the smallish head to the body. The shoulders drop into a subtle curve and flow in even diagonals to his hands which seem to be hanging loosely in front of him. The drapery on this convincingly rendered expensive silky white textile cannot be rendered any better.

There is no doubt about the artist’s attempt to endow the subject with a unique air of importance and accomplishment; even a feeling of the spiritual. To some extent, the painting looks like an apparition; the fixed, almost morose look and the gaunt posture blend with the white costume and the blue background to create the feeling of someone who is airborne. This feeling is furthered by the fact that the lower body is not visible. The green shrub, which could have been a tree dwarfed by this ascending creature, adds to the fleeting sky-bound feeling. This painting is so Skokian that one gets a feeling of looking at a very tall person, mounted live on a pedestal. It is possible that the artist captured the President during his inauguration or at a national conference as he made a presentation.

Even though Barber the sculptor has always taken precedence over Barber the painter, it is in painting that his originality is fully demonstrated; this picture testifies to a greater range, depth, and force, though it is simple in
outlook. Endowed with an ever ready mind and an unfailing power of invention, the artist, as other Skokian artists, following his natural taste and inclination, and at the same time trying to imitate nature, created a work which is a step ahead of bare realism. He presented this subject in such a way that the man's attributes and personality seem to be showing through. It will be difficult, maybe impossible, to find a parallel to this degree of Skokian style presentation. This could be called, acute or veristic Skokian style; an absolutely phenomenal showing of the Skokian artist's ability to present the real as realistically as only a Skokian artist can.

In each of the elements used, the artist communicates a clear understanding and an amazing eloquence in his definition and application of them. President Aliyu Usman Shehu Shagari is, therefore, a dual portrait; a portrait of a man, and especially, a portrait of the immense power of the Skokian artist to present realism in a way that transcends art for art's sake.

*Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther*

Kolade Oshinowo

Oil, 91x122 cm

**FIGURE 3.10**

This portrait of one of the foremost, indigenous, Nigerian Christian evangelists shows a gentleman who is overwhelmed with the urgency of the need to invite the people to meet and accept God for their individual salvation,
and for the salvaging of his nation. The artist captured this image as the Bishop read from the Bible and explained issues to his listeners; this includes the viewers of this painting.

The principal motif in this closed composition, Bishop Crowther, is positioned off-center, more to the right border of the canvas. His body from waist down appears to be reclining against the banister, or the short wooden wall of the verandah. His frame occupies approximately two-thirds of the entire picture. It runs from the foreground, through the middle and background, into the light bluish sky.

At the far left of the painting lies the cathedral, relating very closely with the skies, and looking like a great snow castle built by a snow architect. Although the aspects of the cathedral are visible, the artist has intentionally subdued the colors to avoid creating an area of equal attraction with the figure, thereby impairing the viewer's undisturbed appreciation of this great work. The vegetation also suffered this hushing, in favor of the main theme of the presentation; the Bishop. What forms the background is not the usual orchards of fruit trees that are common features at parsonages. Instead, the artist presents the middle ground as a greenish-yellow mound devoid of trees of any consequence, except for a few isolated leafless trees dwarfed by perspective. It is also easily noticeable that there are no animate objects within the format.

Having thus effectively eliminated diversions and distractions, Oshinowo brings us face to face with this grave looking figure, who seems to be looking
not our faces or costumes, but our hearts and our souls.

In comparison with the rest of the body, the head appears small. The woolly white hair, reflecting the predominant yellows and greens in the environment, crowns the head, and runs down to form thick, almost organic side-buns, which terminate at the exact point where the halter neck collar begins. See the effectiveness of the white borders on the dark brown face. The contrast between the two opposite colors has helped to animate the face. A large bulging forehead, defined by a crisp hairline, gives way to the scanty eyebrows that have also grayed. The eyes are deeply set in dark sockets, only peering out in the attitude of a fox, and reflecting an anguished soul. The bags under his eyes and the look of a badly hurt prize-fighter is not as a result of the man’s age. Neither is it resultant from his laments for earthly riches. It is because of his agonizing and travailing for the salvation of many lost souls. The subject’s nose is atypical of the Yoruba, a suggestion that he may have had a non-Yoruba ethnic parent or grandparents. The battle and concern raging in his mind, as clearly conveyed on the face, is accented by the clenched lips that have been drawn up, and sideways, into thinness, by the agitated facial muscles.

Though colorful and also occupying a very large area of the painting, the costume is treated in a rush-rush manner to tone down its potential as a distraction from the face of the Bishop. The treatment is a step or two away from qualifying as the traditional mud-wall painting with its unmistakable quality.
of a thick black or brown line bordering, or delineating the object. The subject's three-piece vestment comprises a light, cream-colored, fluffy and voluminous gown which in all its ramification points to the Shakespearean culture or Elizabethan for inspiration. It is transversed by a variety of folds, some vertical and long while others are short and deep. The lower hands bulge into organic forms held together at the wrist by a purple ribbon, beyond which are skirt-shaped frills and lace. The hands, which are bordered on all sides by the creamy-white costume background, fall in sharp contrast with the textiles, and, consequently, look darker than the face. It holds some materials, most prominent of which is a tiny green book; possibly a condensed copy of the Bible. The angular position of the right hand seems to be pointing to two other books on the wooden dwarf wall. One of the books is a Bible, as the caption on it and the inscription of a Christian cross suggest. The artist succeeded in portraying a man who lives in the world, but is not of the world (John 17:14).

Bishop Crowther is presented as a man wholly concerned with spiritual issues; an image of a typical saint; more than an ordinary man walking down the street; the portrait of a man on an urgent life-saving mission for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is easy to tell that the artist did not try to flatter the Bishop's image by presenting him in a more relaxed mood, that would have lent the subject a more handsome countenance and dignifying air. Instead he captured him at a time when the entire essence of the clergy's existence is manifest on his face.
He, therefore, presented him with an honest and unadorned piety that is entirely sincere.

Queen Amina of Zaria
Erhabor Emokpae
Oil
FIGURE 3.11
This uniquely presented painting of Queen Amina of Zaria features a portrait of the queen and a war narration with Queen Amina in command. This style enabled Emokpae to show the individual’s physiognomy as well as her attributes, character, and personality. The painting has duality of theme, being both a portrait and a narration involving the portrait.

The painting in the main is that of Queen Anima during a military campaign, leading a very large army of sword welding warriors against the enemy. The imposing portrait positioned to the extreme right of the format is a study of the queenly beauty of Amina. The artist seems to be asking the viewer to compare this most exquisite beauty, looking so serene with a skin texture that can sell a mediocre ointment, against the violence and carnage in the making, ahead of her. This tedious emotional contrast brings out the electric in the painting, the sense of serenity pitched against the violent. The portrait in a way looks like an apparition, or the psyche of the Queen trying to maintain calmness in her contemplation of the best strategy to adopt in the fray.

In the narration part of the painting behind the Queen, she is seen riding
ahead of her cavalry, eyes wide-awake and fiery, looking ahead beyond the horizon, and expecting the enemy to emerge at any time. The wide gazing eyes combine with her raised eyebrows, a long face, and pouting lips to conjure up an image of a goddess bent on vengeance. Comparing the battle face and the serene one, it can safely be said that the former has been transfigured by the rage, the burning desire to peel the hide off of the enemies. The loose end of her scarf flies freely in the wind as her horse charges forward, seemingly possessed by the same fury and rage. The agitation of the horse is testified to by its near acrobatic leap, with all its four legs in the air. It is able to accomplish the feat because the warrior queen has her spurs buried in its sides. Resulting from the operatic posturing are angles of differing degrees that are described by the legs of the horse. It is this combination of rectilinear and curvilinear that gives this painting a convincing dynamism. As the other riders hold their swords high in vertical and diagonal placements, the Queen differs, holding hers horizontally in a slashing mode.

In this extremely dramatic painting, Amina's figure is indisputably the major concern of the artist, and, therefore, the zenith, both in significance, stature, and emphasis. Other riders are lumped together in a confusion of pounding hooves, clashing horses, and whirling concerto of swaddling costumes. Their individuality is not decipherable. It appears as if they are simply content with riding in the company of this great and almost legendary warrior queen. Her significance is further buffered by what seems like a
reversed perspective, with her at the apex looming over the rest of the field. The artist is not unaware of hierarchical perspective, which he has maximally used here to further the emphasis already lavished on the premier figure in the painting.

The picture plane seems unable to hold the excitement and fury on the format, forcing the action to spill over the horizon. The viewer is drawn to look at the far left in anticipation of more horsemen emerging to join others riding in a huge diagonal across the picture plane, and creating an inverted jagged triangle, with Amina at the apex. Slightly off-center towards the left and immediately behind the stationery portrait of Amina, the artist allows some room for the eye and the horses to dash across the plane. The anticipated move intensifies the feeling of anxiety, and sense of urgency in the work.

The gray skies, with few areas of yellow signifying the sun adds to the ominousness of this enterprise. It is surprising that even with this cloudy, mournful sky, the ground looks to be burning under an unprotected assault by the an invisible sun. The bright yellow ochre, serving as a backdrop, allows for the figures in the fore and middle grounds to be better identified as three dimensional objects.

It can be seen that in the presentation of the portrait, the artist was not reaching for a perfect beauty as in plain aesthetic beauty, but has gone behind the heart and mind of a warrior queen. In this way, he is able to present the soul of a loving woman endowed with all the spiritual and physical attributes of
the leader and protector of her people. While distancing the spectator from the stampeding and hard breathing of horses and their riders, the artist invited them to dialogue with the protagonist, by virtue of a magnetic, superior-to-Mona Lisa, enigmatic face.

The heroism of Amina, a ready subject of great interest to Nigerians and Africanists, is depicted here looking directly at us with a calm dignity and quiet pride. She looks queenly without its accompanying arrogance and self-congratulation. The sculptured scarf, which was seen flying in the battle scene, has come to rest snugly, adorning the head of the queen like a crown would adorn the head of Queen Elizabeth. Her slightly parted lips appear to be sucking in some air, or intentionally parted to engage the attention of the male. It appears that she is saying forget the fury, I am still every inch a woman. She is youthful and endowed with a satiny skin, the smoothness of which and glow dares any healthy man to resist her. Her squinted eyes have a romantic and mischievous glint. They seem glazed and deep, and hold in their depth some mystery. She stares into the eyes and the soul of the spectator in a way that seems to withhold the invitation that is offered by her beauty.

This is Skokian style at its best, bringing to focus, the crest and core of the Theory, and celebrating with reckless abandon its principles and characteristics.

SUMMARY

It is easy to find that in the eleven paintings discussed the individual
Skokian artists operated from a Code of Conduct which acted as a "flexible" wedge to keep them from cascading over the borders of Skokian art style. The artists sought for beauty only as they saw it, but, sometimes, took the pardonable liberties that do not interfere with the definition of Skokian style. It is easy to find that the varied degrees of interpretations given to Skokian (Authentic, Acute, Dynamic, Mundane, Veristic...) stayed very much within the limits of the style and its essential characteristics; not offending the dominance of Artistic values over the Aesthetic values.
CHAPTER 4

MEASURING SKOKIAN ART FORMS ANALYZED IN CHAPTERS 2 AND 3; SCULPTURE, AND PAINTINGS.

This chapter will attempt to measure, individually, all the Skokian style art forms that were analyzed in chapters 2 and 3 respectively. The objective of this exercise is to find the percentages of the two values; Artistic values and Aesthetic values in the Skokian style works, and to use these results in turn, to evaluate the Skokianness of each art work. This measurement will help us to put some worth or price, and score/grade the works within a 0-100%. according to the predominance of Artistic values over the Aesthetic values in each work. The determined percentage would automatically place the work within one of the ranks already mentioned above; High Skokian, Medium Skokian and, Low Skokian.

Since this exercise will follow some of the patterns already established, in pages 28-31, the table of the Ideal 12 Characteristics will be reproduced in the current chapter, for convenient reference during the measurement;
We will find that using the provided formula as a guide, it will be is easy for the student or scholar, or even an ordinary viewer to ascertain the category or classification of an African/Nigerian Skokian art work. For example, if the majority of the characteristics of a work is overwhelmingly *artistic values* (*Form; Visual*), the art piece must be primarily Skokian, but if the *aesthetic values* (*Function; conceptual/mental*) dwarf the *artistic values*, then, the work would most certainly be the Awo art style.

The Following are the 12 ideal Characteristics of Skokian art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Theme or motif derived from an African tradition</td>
<td>1. Artistic/ Aesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cross-cultural inspiration crucial as a factor</td>
<td>2. Aesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A strong evidence of the use of a posed model (animate or inanimate) showing a formal or informal academically trained artist. Informal training consists of the artist copying from models from books, magazines, and photographs</td>
<td>3. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emphatic linear or aerial perspective</td>
<td>4. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. An evidence of good understanding of color theory</td>
<td>5. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Modeling of forms in color or in three dimensionality</td>
<td>6. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Exposure of elements in the composition to one light source with consistent cast shadow</td>
<td>7. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. All elements of the composition showing definite setting in the African environment</td>
<td>8. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Human proportions true to life</td>
<td>9. Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A manifestation of overlapping of elements in the composition</td>
<td>10. Artistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. A strong interest in portraiture, which shows an understanding of the internal structure of things as they appear through external coverings—for example, the accuracy of musculature  
12. Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality.

11. Artistic

This information, which was given in chapter one, is also being repeated here for the refreshing of minds before, and during the measurement and evaluation of the works.

As evidence shown in the table above, out of the 12 Ideal Characteristics of the Skokian style works, there are 11 (artistic values) to 1 (aesthetic value), or 10 (artistic values to 2 aesthetic values). The second option considers the fact that characteristic No.2, can be adjudged Artistic or Aesthetic depending on the inclination, and amount of its "presence" in a given work. Consequently, one work may have two different calculations; the first option is calculated as 91.7% Artistic Values, to 8.3% Aesthetic values while the second option is calculated as 83.3% Artistic Values to 16.7 Aesthetic Values. We find that in either case, Artistic values overwhelmingly outweigh the Aesthetic values. The result of the calculation for each work will thereby determine that the Skokian work is mainly visual, rather than mental (or vice versa), in approach. Should Aesthetic values outweigh the Artistic values, then, the work is not Skokian art.

Measurement and Evaluation

The *Chained Man* (fig 2.1) page 69. exhibits the following Skokian
characteristics: 1) Theme derived from African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 3) Evidence that the artist received formal art training; 4) Convincing modeling of form; 5) Setting the figure in an African environment; 6) Human proportion that is true to life; and 7) Strong evidence of the artist's interest in portraiture; 8) Cross-cultural inspiration is a factor; 9) Linear and aerial perspectives are present, but not emphatic. This is explained in page...; 10) Evidence of good understanding of color theory. It would appear that a sculptor does not need this characteristic, but he does. Though his colors are limited and controlled by the complexion of his subject, since the artist is painting closely to nature, he has to understand colors, to be able to blend them into the desired flesh-tone; 11) Work exhibits the artist's understanding of the internal structure of things—as in musculature.; 12) Overlapping in free-standing sculpture is an optical illusion. This is so because, this element is manifest when a viewer walks around a sculpture, and observes that the part that are out of sight are so because they are being 'overlapped' or shielded from view. Relief sculptures as we will find latter in Ofala Festival figure 2.6 manifest all the elements that are ordinarily thought to be only possible with paintings.

Calculation: There are 11 artistic values to 1 aesthetic value, therefore, the Chained Man is evaluated 91.7%(92%) It can be seen that all but one of the characteristics manifested in the work are artistic values, confirming the sculpted work as Skokian.
(2) **Adult Education** (fig 2.3) page 190. This image is very strongly anchored onto the Skokian principles, having shown the following characteristics: 1) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 2) Human proportions true to life; 3) A strong interest in portraiture; 4) Cross-cultural inspiration is a crucial element in the work; 5) Setting the figure in an African environment; 6) Motif derived from African tradition; 7) interest in portraiture, showing understanding of internal structures, as in musculature; 8) Perspective is present, but subtle (explained previously); 9) A manifestation of overlapping of elements (explained on page 161, characteristic No. 12); 10) Understanding of color theory (explained on page 161, Characteristic No. 10); 11) One light source. Because the sculpture is in the round, and stationary, it is affected by the sun, from different angles, at different times, as the sun progresses from the East to West; 12) Differentiation of form for artistic quality.

Calculation: 11 Artistic values for 91.7% to 1 Aesthetic Value for 8.3% = 91.7% Skokian art style.

(3) **General Mohammed** (fig 2.4) page 197; This work is a powerful testimony to the Skokian style because of the overwhelming dominance of the Artistic values over the Aesthetic values in a count of the Skokian characteristics manifested. The following are easily visible: 1) Theme derived from the African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 3) Modeling of form in 3-dimensionality; 4) Setting in an African environment; 5) Human proportion is true to life; 6) There is evidence of a strong interest in
portraiture; 7) Cross-cultural factor; 8) Understanding of color theory (explained on page 161); 9) Subtle overlapping (explained on page 161); 10) Exposure to one light source (see pg. 156.10); 11) Differentiation of forms for artistic quality; 12) Linear and atmospheric perspective (explained on page 168-169)

Calculation: There are 11 Artistic values and 1 aesthetic value. The work is evaluated 92% Skokian

(4) *Chief Aderemi Adesoji* (fig 2.5). page 198 This portrait shows the same attachment to the Skokian characteristics as the other work, *General Mohammed* (fig 2.4), executed by the same artist. Its Skokianness is undeniable with the following characteristics: 1) Theme derived from the African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 3) Modeling of form in 3-dimensionality; 4) Setting in an African environment; 5) Human proportion is true to life; 6) There is evidence of a strong interest in portraiture; 7) Cross-cultural factor; 8) Understanding of color theory (explained on page 161); 9) Subtle overlapping (explained on page 161.12); 10) Exposure to one light source (see above (Chained Man fig 2.1); 11) Differentiation of forms for artistic quality; 12) Linear and atmospheric perspective (explained on page 175-176)

Calculation: There are 11 Artistic values for 91.7% to 1 aesthetic value for 8.3%. The work is evaluated 92% Skokian

(5) *Sango* (fig 2.6) page 91. This work, more than others already discussed in this summary, testifies to the whole range of Skokian elements, identifiable in the 12 characteristics. The characteristics include: 1) Theme or
motif derived from African tradition; 2) Cross-cultural inspiration as a factor; 3) Strong evidence of the use of posed model (Though the image represented is that of a god, it is evident that the artist used models in his study; 4) Evidence of the artist having definitely received formal training. (This fact is not because he was a famous artist, but rather deducible from the academic detailing involved.); 5) Unquestionable three dimensionality; 6) Definite setting in African environment; and 7) A strong interest in portraiture, showing an understanding of the internal structure of things, as they appear through external coverings. (This is loudly testified to by the handling of the musculature.); 8) Understanding of color theory (explained on page 161.10); 9) Subtle overlapping (explained on page 161.12); 10) Exposure to one light source (see above (Adult Education fig 2.3) 11) Differentiation of forms for artistic quality; 12) Linear and atmospheric perspective (explained on page 175-176).

Calculation: There are 10 Artistic values and 2 aesthetic values. This is the case because characteristic No.1 is here considered as aesthetic value. Since Sango is a god, his personality will call for mental exercise before it could be fathomed. The work is evaluated 83.3% Artistic and 16.7% Aesthetic.

(6) Ofa Festival (fig 2.7) page 200;: This relief carving combines most of the characteristics of sculpted Skokian works, and also some that are usually, easily identifiable in paintings. This is possibly because, as already explained in the analysis, the artist attempted to use the carving tools as the
painter would use his brush. In a sense, it could be said that he attempted to paint with his chisels. This effort yielded the following characteristics; 1) Manifestation of overlapping of elements in the composition; 2) Presence of linear and aerial perspectives; 3) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality. To these are added the rest of the characteristics already discovered in other sculpted works. They include; 4) Theme or motif derived from African tradition; 5) Strong evidence of use of posed model; and 6) Modeling of forms to convey the illusion of 3-Dimensionality; 7) An understanding of color theory; 8) Exposure to one light source; 9) Evidence of cross-cultural inspiration; 10) Setting in African environment; 11) Understanding of internal structure of things; 12) Convincing three-dimensionality.

Calculation: There are 11 Artistic values and 1 Aesthetic value. This work would have ordinarily scored high, but because of the lack of convincing musculature, 3-dimensionality in some areas of the relief, and because of the strong showing of aesthetic value in the subject matter, the work is evaluated 83.3% Artistic and 16.7% Aesthetic.

(7) Queen Amina of Zaria (fig 2.8) page 201; shows: 1) Evidence that the motif was derived from African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 3) Evidence of formal or informal training; 4) Elements in the composition showing definite setting in the African environment; 5) Evidence of a strong interest in portraiture; 6) Convincing evidence of 3-dimensionality; 7)
Cross-cultural consideration; 8) Overlapping; 8) Understanding of color theory
9) Exposure to one light source; 10) Human proportion true to life; 11) Strong
interest in portraiture; 12) Linear and Aerial perspectives.

Calculation: There are 11 Artistic values 92% to 1 Aesthetic value worth 8.31%
The work is therefore overwhelmingly Skokian.

Summary

It can then be safely concluded that since all the sculpted works show,
individually, overwhelming dominance of Artistic Values, that they are, and
should be categorized, Skokian style works. The result of the calculation done
to find the average score of all the sculpted works analyzed is 89.9%. This
score places the works within the rank of High Skokian style

Chapter Three extensively tested the viability of the Skokian Theory, its
principles and values, with eleven Skokian paintings of varied themes and
degrees of Skokianness in the presentations. It was discovered, as has been
stated, that though some works look at the first glance as belonging outside
the Skokian group, they snugly fit in, after they have been matched critically
and studiously against the 12 characteristics of Skokian art. Let it also be
known that there are many works in the Kuntu and Awo styles that the
untrained will easily pass for Skokian. A very good example is Yisa
Akinbolaji’s Ilu Ndun (fig 3.16) page 214. The sub-styles or groupings of the
paintings were also established. Some works were extremely close to a
photocopy (absolutes) of the real, but none came any closer than Barber’s
portrait of President Aliyu Usman Shehu Shagari (fig 3.8). Most of the works belong to the sub-group, *skomuntu*, but there are others, for example, Igboanugo’s *Series* that inclined toward *skomumu* (figure 3.1), and *skomuo* (figure 3.2). The artists in this group (painting) are as diversified as their individual approaches to painting are. However, one element seems to have tied them together, their observance of the Skokian principle, and the resultant testimony of their works to the durability of the 12 principles as a trustworthy tool in the study, analysis, and research in Skokian art. Artists whose Skokian style works are analyzed include, Abayomi Barber, Nsikak Essien, Erhabor Emokpae, Chudi Igboanugo, Pius Nnubia, Akinola Lasekan, and Chief Aina Onabolu. The list incorporates both young and old, living and dead artists, spanning the major ethnic groups of Nigeria.

(1) *The City Gate* (fig 3.1); This *skomumu* work features all the known characteristics of a Skokian work, both the Artistic and Aesthetic values, namely: 1) Theme derived from African tradition; 2) Cross-cultural inspiration as a factor; 3) Evidence of formal training (This is the only way that the epitome of European art technique, linear perspective, would have come in.); 4) Emphatic linear and aerial perspective; 5) Evidence of good understanding of color theory; 6) A convincing modeling of form in color in three dimensionality; 7) Only one strong source of light (Though the light source seems omni-directional or scattered, there is only one strong source of light—the possibility that there could be other light sources has led Professor Odita
(1998) to modify this characteristic to read one external light source).

The consistent cast shadow in this work establishes that there is only one strong and significant light source; 8) Definite setting in African environment; 9) Convincing evidence of proportion being true to life (Though the human elements are insignificant); 10) Abundance of overlapping in the composition; 11) Masterful use of perspective to create distance, depth and illusion of 3-dimensionality; and 12) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality.

Calculation: The work has 11 Artistic values for 91.7% and 1 Aesthetic value which equals 8.31%, making it Skokian style.

(2) Philosopher, Critic and Poet (fig 3.4); This portrait is a good representative of the Dynamic Skokian style in painting, and responds favorably to the characteristics of Skokian: 1) Evidence of 3-dimensionality; 2) Formal training of artist; 3) One main external light source; 4) Understanding of Color theory; 5) Modeling of the form to give the impression of three dimensionality; 6) True to life human proportions; 7) Nigerian subject matter; 8) Cross-cultural inspiration; 9) Differentiation of elements for artistic reasons; 10) A strong interest in portraiture; 11) Perspective; 12) Overlapping of forms.

Calculation: Though all the characteristics could be found, many are insignificantly represented. This threatens the rating of this work which has 10 Artistic values (some with weak signals), for 83.3%, to 16.7% Aesthetic values. This work is conservatively evaluated.

(3) Oseakwa At Noon (fig 3.5) page 130; This is one of the paintings that
suggest at a first glance that they belong outside the Skokian style. Such paintings are eventually grafted in by the generosity of the Skokian characteristics and sub-grouping. A study of the painting will reveal that it does exhibit an impressive number of the qualifying Skokian characteristics: 1) The motif derived from African tradition; 2) Evidence that the artist actually painted the scenery from visual observation, and not from memory; 3) Demonstration of academicism seen in the deployment of the western technique of realistic art; 4) Emphatic linear and aerial perspective; 5) Strong evidence that the artist understands color theory; 6) Forms modeled into three dimensionality; 7) Exposure of elements in the painting to one primary light source (There is a secondary light source from the right which is light that is reflected back by the water); 8) Overlapping of elements; 9) Elements shown in a definite African environment; and 10) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality; 11) Cross-cultural inspiration; 12) Understanding of the internal structure of things Calculation: 11 artistic values=91.7% to 1 Aesthetic value=8.31%. The work is predominated by Artistic value, therefore it is Skokian style.

(6) Portrait of Chief Sapara (fig 3.6); This work embodies all the known characteristics of the Skokian style, yet it is not absolute. Without any effort one sees: 1) Theme and motif derived from African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of a model; 3) Strong evidence of interest in portraiture; 4) Three-dimensionality is achieved; 5) One main identifiable light source; 6) Evidence of good understanding of color theory; 7) Human proportion is true to
life; 8) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality; 9) inconsistent
cast shadow due to the presence of a secondary light source; the main light
source is identifiable 10) Emphatic linear, aerial, and atmospheric perspective
(The smokiness or sfumatic effect cannot be substantiated—without further
investigation—as a conscious insertion of the artist, and not an element
deposited on the work, by age: The effect of weather is known to have
defaced and destroyed works of art, especially paintings, thus, great museums
continually renovate works, with the intention of at least retaining some degree
of their originality.). 12) Cross-cultural inspiration.

Calculation: 11 Artistic value=91.7%(92%) to 1 Aesthetic value=8.31%. The
work is a strong Skokian style painting.

(7) Mrs. Spencer Savage (fig 3.7); 1) A strong evidence of the use of
posed model; 2) Modeling of color to realize the illusion of three-dimensionality;
3) Exposure to one main light source (The effect is reduced drastically by the
black and white copy, as presented in the study); 4) Human proportion is true
to life; 5) Strong interest in portraiture; 6) Differentiation of forms in the painting
for variety and artistic quality; and 7) Cross-cultural inspiration as a factor; 8)
Overlapping; Some characteristics may be present in the work, but due to its
bleached quality, such characteristics cannot be deciphered
Calculation: Mrs Savage's limited visible characteristics prevents an objective
assessment of its value

(8) Self Portrait (fig 3.8); In spite of its monochromatic palette, this
work scores highly because of its revelation of an overwhelming number of Skokian characteristics, namely: 1) Motif derived from African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of posed model; 3) Evidence that the artist received some training, formal or informal; 4) Evidence of a good understanding of color theory (This point may be argued because of the monochrome nature of the work; however, looking closely at the work, with knowledge of the color-wheel, one sees that though the painting appears done in one color, there are actually other colors which were derived from the primary color used—the value differences and variation in the tonality call for mastery of color in order to be so manipulated.); 5) Easily discerned source of light (In spite of the difficulty in holding down the actual source of the primary light, its flickering presence, nevertheless, is discernible.); 6) Modeling of form in color or in 3-dimensionality; 7) Human proportion is true to life; 8) Elements set in African environment; 9) Strong interest in portraiture, showing an understanding of the internal structure of things; 10) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality; 11) Cross-cultural inspiration; 12) insignificant overlapping.

Calculation: This Self Portrait is a convincing Skokian painting. with its 11

Artistic value =92%, to 1% Aesthetic value=8.31%

(9) President Shehu Shagari (fig 3.9); This portrait came very close to qualifying for the Skokian Hall of Fame for its near absoluteness to reality. It is the epitome of the testimony of the Skokian artist's ability to replicate reality as
his eye sees it. Then, why did this work, with its overwhelming Skokian characteristic, fall short of the Hall of Fame? The answer is because it does have one aesthetic value, and an identifiable ethereal quality. There is evidence of Barber’s known inclination toward peripheral surrealism, a cross-cultural inspiration, that may affect the stability of this particular work as pure Skokian. The portrait has the following characteristics: 1) Theme and motif derived from African tradition; 2) Strong evidence of the use of a model; 3) Strong evidence of interest in portraiture; 4) Three-dimensionality is achieved; 5) One main identifiable light source; 6) Evidence of good understanding of color theory; 7) Human proportion is true to life; 8) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality; 8) Consistent cast shadow due to the presence of a secondary light source; the main light source is identifiable 10) Emphatic linear, aerial, and atmospheric perspective; 11) Overlapping; 12) Cross-cultural inspiration.

Calculation: 11 Artistic value=91.7%(92%) to Aesthetic value=8.31%. The work is a strong Skokian style painting.

(10) Samuel Ajayi Crowther (fig 3.10). The painting testifies to the following characteristics: 1) Theme and motif derived from African tradition; 2) Cross-cultural inspiration; 3) A strong evidence of the use of posed model, showing formal or informal academic training; 4) Emphatic linear and aerial perspective (The strong sfumato effect that partially shields the cathedral from view was explained in the text (Chapter Three; Analysis of Skokian Paintings)
as an intentional stunt by the artist; an attempt to de-emphasize all other forms that would have challenged the main motif, the Bishop, in prominence and importance.); 4) Clear evidence of understanding of color theory; 5) Modeling of forms in color or in 3-dimensionality; 6) Exposure to one light source; 7) True to life human proportion; 8) Manifestation of overlapping; 9) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality; 10) Cross-cultural inspiration; 11) Human proportion true to life; 12) Elements set in African environment.

Calculation: 11 Artistic values=91.7%, as against 1 Aesthetic value, amounting to 8.31%. Overwhelming Artistic values make the painting Skokian.

(11) *Queen Amina of Zaria* (fig 3.11); This unique presentation is a proud testimony to the beauty and effectiveness of the 12 characteristics in determining the appropriateness of a work to be categorized Skokian. The visible characteristics include: 1) Theme and motif derived from African tradition; 2) Cross-cultural inspiration; 3) A strong evidence of posed model, showing evidence of formal or informal academic training; 4) Emphatic linear and aerial perspective; 5) Evidence of good understanding of color theory; 6) Modeling of forms in color; 7) Exposure of elements in the composition to one light source; 8) All elements in the composition showing definite setting in the African environment; 9) Human proportions are true to life; 10) Manifestation of overlapping of elements in the composition; 11) Strong interest in portraiture; and 12) Differentiation of forms for variety and artistic quality.

Calculation: 11 Artistic value=92% to, 1 Aesthetic value=8.31% Artistic values
easily dominates Aesthetic values in this painting that is convincingly Skokian.

The average score of all the paintings evaluated is 91%. The reason for this high score is because, paintings very easily exhibit the entire 12 ideal characteristics. Moreover, it is possible that the average experience of the painters which carried over to their products, may have made some difference in the total score.

The above measurements, tests/evaluations, have unequivocally established the following:

1) That the 12 ideal characteristics of Skokian art are highly effective criteria in the assessment of the Skokianness of a work, sculpted or painted;

2) That, though several works with the same basic principles are executed as closely as possible to the prescriptions of the principles, they can still be varied in their achievements;

3) That works can look Skokian, though they are not, and vice versa;

4) That paintings have greater potentials for manifesting all the 12 characteristics of Skokian art style.

An Explanation of what would appear to be a weakness of sculpted Skokian works:

It is erroneously thought that sculpted works do not exhibit the full range of the 12 ideal characteristics—that the works exhibit only the core characteristics, and do not have the major elements of western European
realistic art technique, i.e., linear and atmospheric perspectives. This misunderstanding arises because; 1) sculpted images are already 3-dimensional and existing in a world of reality. The world of reality, therefore, acts as a backdrop against which the sculpted images are seen. The Skokian sculptor does not have to create a feeling of 3-dimensionality, or perspective, aerial or atmospheric. They are already present, and 2) Someone not trained may have some difficulty finding those elements, except they are 'shown' to him. In the same way, the sfumatic effect, though sometimes visible and adding to the power of the image to convey the objective of its creation, is not the creation of the sculptor, because it is the work of nature. It is known that some dynamic sculptors study the environment before designing, and executing an out-door sculpture. Some museums create or, are known to have tried to create natural environments for sculpted images. Environments are sometimes considered as part of his work. Good examples include, Sango (fig 2.4) pg. 196, by Ben Enwonwu, and Queen Amina (fig 2.8) pg. 198, by Ben Ekanem. Relief sculptures, e.g., Ofala Festival (fig 2.7) pg. 197, are basically 2-dimensional presentations, no matter how deep the cuttings are. Therefore, as 2-dimensional presentations, they struggle with the same desire and problems of the painter to create an illusion of 3-dimensionality. In this way, they are forced to attempt using their tools the way that the painter does his brushes.

Working within a format which does not exist for the 3-dimensional
sculpture, he is able to utilize, though minimally, the western technique of linear perspective. He also overlaps forms in the way that the painter does. The relief sculpture could be called the convergence of the elements in sculpture and painting.

The presence of the major western European realistic art technique in free-standing sculptures can be experienced by an informed observer. Important information was passed on in previous paragraphs. (see also pp.155-156, and 169)
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

What Is The African Essence In Skokian Art Style?

Where Is The Western European Realistic Technique, Especially In This Study?

Three vital elements, seen in this discussion, unite the entire analysis. They are: 1) An appreciation of the nature of each art work in relation to the 12 Ideal characteristics of Skokian art—meaning, each work discussed is referenced to the 12 ideal characteristics;

2) The use of the western European technique of realism as a universal phenomenon—the most significant being the linear and atmospheric perspective, out of which emerges tributary manifestations, such as chiaroscuro, sfumato, etc.; and

2) The use of African models as a consistent theme in Skokian Art, except in few occasions (when Skokian artists produce works for foreigners who present their own themes; e.g., some of the portrait of colonial personels), leading towards the universal nature of the African in terms of his essence in Africa, and the African Diaspora. In each of the works analyzed in this

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dissertation, there is, for example, the subject or theme with which the Skokian artist works. At the same time, he engages the western technique of realism.

As extensively discussed above, and observed in the analyses of Skokian art forms in previous chapters; 1, 2 and 3, and used in the measurement of the art forms discussed in this dissertation in chapter 4, Skokian style has 12 characteristics, including their consequent Artistic values and Aesthetic values.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the 12 characteristics of the Skokian style are made up of 11 Artistic values, for 91.7%. and 1 Aesthetic value; for 8.3% i.e., 11 parts of Artistic values to 1 part Aesthetic value. This is to say that the Artistic aspect of the Skokian style is overwhelmingly more important than the Aesthetic aspect of the art style. It then follows that Skokian style favors a visual form that can be realized in Skokian style representation.

Western European Technique of Realism

European technique of realism includes: elements of perspective, both linear and atmospheric; modeling of color and form; one external light source and consistent cast shadow; as well as foreground, middle ground and background, etc. These two elements, African material and western European realistic technique, can be clearly perceived to unite and work together to give life to Skokian art style. The term 'converge', therefore, best typifies and
acknowledges the nature and thrust of Skokian art.

The western European technique of realism has always favored the following eight elements:

1) One point perspective, as demonstrated in *The City Gate* (fig 3.1) page 199;

2) Central focus painted in such way that the primary image receives emphatic treatment and attention—this helps to convey the central meaning of the work. Other elements that contribute to this emphasis, and, therefore, the prominence or supremacy of the motif, that is the focal point, are accordingly de-emphasized. For example in *The City* (fig 3.2) page 200, the artist’s major motif is the city referred to in the title. By minimizing the visual importance of the people gathered in front of the city, the size of the city is automatically maximized.

3) Atmospheric perspective, as eloquently seen in *Bishop Ajayi Crowther* (fig 3.10) page 208, and in *Chief Sapara* (fig 3.6) page 204. Atmospheric perspective manifests also as sfumato (cloudiness or smokiness) pervading the picture. It makes the picture fuzzy, helping the figure to recede into the background together with the one-point perspective, as an illusion of the eye. In the two works used to illustrate the last element, the atmospheric effect does not cover the entire works, but only appears in the background. It appears that it served the purpose of eliminating any subsidiary object from competing for importance with the main motifs. In a way, it creates a feeling of ‘push and pull’ between the bright and cloudy portions of the picture plane,
thereby helping to create more animation in the work.

4) The Foreground, Middle Ground and Background help to place the picture within the living world, the earth; e.g., *Oseakwa at Noon* (fig 3.5) page 203. The effect of the absence of a convincing foreground is evident in the portrait of *President Shagari* (fig 3.7) page 207, where it has helped to give the figure a feeling of 'ascension'.

5) Use of Color to model form leading to the illusion of three-dimensionality in painting, e.g., *The City Gate* (fig 3.1) page 199. In sculpture, the forms are actually chiseled into three-dimensionality. There is no illusion, except in the experience of perspective. This feeling realized, in some relief sculptures, e.g., *Ofala Festival* (fig 2.7) pg. 197, or when monumental sculptures are placed on a high pedestal, or in such a way that a viewer sees it from an angle that creates the impression of fore-shortening. This will convey a feeling of distance—the closer part appearing larger than the parts that are further away—in proportion to the whole. For example, if *Adult Education* (fig 2.3) pg. 193, is positioned at eye level, and one views it frontally, and from a close quarter, the feet will look larger in proportion to the rest of the sculpture. This is optic illusion. It is this feeling that a Skokian painter tries to communicate through the deployment of perspective.

6) One external light source that pervades the entire picture from one 40-60\(^\circ\) angle, with a corresponding cast shadow, thereby creating chiaroscuro that helps in unifying the objects in the painting, e.g. *Mai Goje* (fig 3.3) pg. 201
This element plays a vital role in sculptures too, where it enhances the three-dimensionality and the general mood of the work. In many works, the interplay of light and shade does not happen by accident, but is considered in the initial design of the image. Lighting in galleries has since become a major area of interest, and specialization. If the figure of *Oba Aderemi* (fig 2.5) were bathed from all sides with powerful illumination, its three-dimensionality would be diminished, and the royalty and majesty that the artist had endowed him with, would be severely mitigated.

7) Human Proportion that is true to Life. This element becomes obvious at sight. Sometimes, some figures are presented in such a way that they communicate a false sense of proportion, e.g., *Adult Education* (fig 2.2) page 193. This false sense of proportion may be as a result of a type of optic illusion, brought about by perspective, as already discussed.

The type of illusion due to perspective that is experienced with sculpted images depends principally on several factors. They are: the size of the sculpture; its distance from the observer; the color of the material finish; and the height of the platform or pedestal on which it is placed. Sometimes environment plays a very active role in communicating the illusion of distance and, therefore, of perspective; both linear and atmospheric. A type of perspective is also experienced in a sculpture garden, where a number of works have been assembled at different distances. The works that are further away from the viewer will usually appear smaller than the ones that are closer.
Figure 2.1, page which shows *The Chained Man* in a sculpture garden, typifies the type of illusion described. *The Chained Man* towers above the sculpture of a traditional man in the background dragging home an obstinate ram. In actuality, the two sculptures are fairly of the same height. Thus, we find that when free-standing sculptures are observed against the backdrop of nature, and environment, and framed in by infinity of sky and vegetation, we begin to see almost all the characteristics easily identifiable in Skokian style paintings.

8) Manifestation of overlapping in the composition. This is obvious in *Queen Amina* (fig 3.11). Overlapping helps to emphasize the effects of perspective. In some ways, all the elements mentioned reciprocate the gestures of one another in accenting each individual elements’ primary role in the ‘construction’ of a truly Skokian style work. This is the point of convergence between the western European realistic art technique and Nigerian/African essence. It is evident from the study that an intimate degree of reliance and reciprocity must take place between the elements of the western European technique of realistic art and the African/Nigerian essence (subject matter) in order for a tangible form to be realized. Let it be noted, that some elements are not tangible, but are “present” implicitly in the Skokian work. It is very much like the fusion of the two metal rail lines that run parallel but appear to converge at a vanishing point. The western European and the African subject matter (the essence), both depend on each other for physical manifestation so that if one element is separated from this union, both will cease to be.
The Use of African Model or Motif

On the surface, it appears that the use of African model or motif is downright simplistic. Still, it is certainly complex. It is the structure of the Skokian art style, of which no technique can violate. It is therefore, the personality of the Skokian art style.

Where the subject matter is unnamed, it is quite possible to identify this African personality of the Skokian style. In this case the subject matter or motif could represent a Ghanaian, a Somalian, Ethiopian, Zulu, or may represent any nation in the African Diaspora, leading to the Universal essence of the subject matter.

What is being established is that, if a painted or sculpted portrait of a "black man or woman" is stripped of its theme/title, and the name of its author, and exhibited in any nation of the world with a "black" presence, that the subject matter of this portrait, would be thought a resident of that community.

During the oral defense of this dissertation on May 26, 1999, Professor William Ted McDaniel of the department of African and African American Studies, also of the Music department at The Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio, made an interesting statement that totally endorsed the validity of the projected African essence/personality, and its Universalism. While trying to fathom the claim as to the universalism of the Skokian theory, Professor McDaniel focussed his attention on a portrait (of this writer, a fact that was
unknown to him)fig.3.4,p. Without further doubt as to the simplicity of the claim, he asked; “what is Skokian about this portrait, I know a lot of Jazz saxophonists and trumpeters who look like this brother”. This real life incident aptly illustrates the claim of this discussion to the Universalism of the African theme aesthetic vocabulary, which is succinctly put in one of Peter Tosh’s chart busters with lyrics that say in part:

...wherever you may be
as long as you are a black man
You are an African

Summary

Chapter One attempted to establish the Zaria School as one of the many viable sources of initial support for the contemporary art in Nigeria, but one that especially benefitted the Skokian style. It considered the place of the Zaria School in the calling forth and in the realization of more consciousness towards instilling African culture into the imported techniques and styles. The chapter considered the importance of admitting the statements by artists on their works (artists Verbalization) for more objective evaluation of the artist, his thoughts leading to his ideas, his style, his background and his general experiences, and how they (may) have individually or corporately influenced his work.

The absence of reliable literature in quality and quantity in the area of Nigerian/African contemporary art was emphatically addressed. The intentional
misrepresentation of facts and the mischievous denigration of contemporary African art, but especially Skokian art, and the consequent preference of Traditional African art over it, was extensively protested.

Reviewing the literature with interest in contemporary African/Nigerian art was a worthwhile exercise that should acquaint and encourage lovers of Contemporary African art with the great efforts being made by the art historians to respond to a crucial need. These are art historians who are more dedicated to unearthing the truth about contemporary Nigerian/African art.

Many scholars have gone beyond expectations to publish very impressive materials on the subject of contemporary African art. Some of the scholars are Jane Kennedy, Janet Stanley, Susan Vogel, Hassan Salahi, Okechukwu Odita, etc. However, in the main area of this study, Professor Odita seems to be the sole contributor to the material leading to the study and establishment of the Skokian art style. His interest in the area spans three decades which are marked with assorted publications from peripheral studies to core research, as the literature review showed.

Chapters 2 and 4 dealt with the analyses of some chosen Skokian works, sculpture and paintings. All the works are portrayed in ways that reflect the real as closely to nature as possible. A more sustained look by a trained viewer should reveal the many different ways that these acclaimed individual Skokian artists approached the task of copying nature, employing the western European realistic art technique, and blending a harmless dosage
of the technique into their African/Nigerian cultural tradition. This essence, this cultural tradition, is what Nigeria/Africa contributes to the convergence, in the form of Subject matter. All the artists kept very close to the unifying factors or elements as prescribed by the Skokian Theory, and were guided by its characteristics. They consistently manifested, in different degrees, the supremacy of Artistic values over Aesthetic values. Thus, in the works, we find, as Professor Odita explained, three valid and primary manifestations of the Skokian Style: The High, which deals with works that have overwhelming artistic values; the Middle, works that have above average of artistic value; and the Low, which accommodates works that may sometimes present sufficient serious and tutored appreciation for it to be classified as Skokian. The last category, the Low, may be called borderline Skokian works.

It must of necessity be pointed out that there is the possibility that no one work is totally and absolutely Skokian. By this, it is being presented that no Skokian work is completely devoid of all manifestations of Awo, and Kuntu art styles. After his sustained study of more than 200 Skokian art works (within Africa, and this includes the Continental and Disporan Africans), Professor Odita (discussion of 5/1/99) affirms to me that if such a work exists, it would be the most successful in the Skokian syntax. It would be a phenomenon and such a work should be recommended for adoption into the Skokian Art Hall of Fame. It is also important to bear in mind that we are dealing with Skokian art works, and not the artists. Therefore, if an artist is able to create one Skokian-
based work, that makes the work Skokian, and does not necessarily make the artist a Skokian artist. An old adage says that "A sparrow, does not make a Summer" For an artist to be classified Skokian, at least 55% of his life work will have to conform to the Skokian principles, and characteristics.

Chapter 4 measured the Skokian style art forms, and ranked them according to the percentages of the the two values that were found in each work; Artistic and Aesthetic.

Therefore, this study has shown, among other things, the importance of the Skokian art style, and has illustrated how this style has wrestled with adversity, and how it has been able to prevail through the sheer dedication of the artists and through the durability of the sustaining characteristics of the style.

As a result, this dissertation has affirmed:

1) The importance of the 12 ideal characteristics of Skokian or Realistic art in the appreciation of the Nigerian/African Skokian art works;
2) The true place of Western European realistic technique in the Skokian works discussed;
3) The significance of Nigerian/African subject matter in the works of Skokian artists in Africa and African Diasporan.
4) The claim that what realism did for the western European culture, Skokian did for the African culture. As Italian art of the 14th century was resascent, so too is the Nigerian Skokian art, both tapping into cultures
and achievements of their predecessors. As it was with Fillippo Brunelleschi and Alberti, so it was with the Arts Society of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria. As a new criteria for judging beauty was established by the Renaissance, so did Professor Okechukwu Odita, through the Skokian art style, set up a yardstick, for measuring Nigeria/African essence in a Skokian style art piece; and finally,

5) This study has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt, that, through the convergence of western European realistic art technique with Nigerian/African motif/subject matter (which is the Constant in this dissertation), a universal Aesthetic vocabulary is produced, especially among the continental and Diasporan Africans.

Recommendation

What seems most evident in this research is as follows;

1) That there is a need for more research to be undertaken in the area of contemporary Nigerian art, but especially, Skokian art style, using a combination of the recommendations of Odita, Seiber, and the suggestions made in this work, under the title, In Search of a Methodology (AppendixA).

2) That the new studies be undertaken by scholars who first and foremost are interested in the furtherance of the study, therefore,
knowledge about Nigerian art, past, and especially, present.

3) That studies should never be done primarily for financial or other peripheral, material aggrandizement. A mercenary attitude has never proved positive for academic research. We already have too much literature in African/Nigerian art, and art history in general, that gives us more insight into the writers than into the subjects.

4) That new scholars should see the topic of African/Nigerian art as a challenge, giving priority to fieldwork, and avoiding the pitfalls of the writers that went before them.

5) That art history scholars should consider switching to the new nomenclature developed by Professor Odita, whereby, Skokian art style becomes Sayan art style. (Visit website <http//:www.cgrg.ohio-state.edu/eodita>) This change does not in any way undermine the original definition of the Theory of contemporary Nigeria/African Skokian art; its essences remain the same, as do its characteristics. What has changed is its name. The new term applies better to the concepts, and relates more to the living African language, that is among the major focuses of the materials presently being developed for use in the area of contemporary African art and history.

6) That there is a desperate need for an effective, well thought-out, and durable methodology expressly designed for the studies of contemporary African/Nigerian art, .
(7) That researchers should show transparent unbiased against the young artists and their works in order to fashion, without prejudice, an active methodology, and finally.

(8) That more exhaustive work should be done on the Theory and Principles of Skokian art in order to unearth its intrinsic qualities, especially its ability to shape or reshape, and introduce meaning to artworks that hitherto raised more troubling questions than pacifying answers.
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By E. Okechukwu Odita
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APPENDICES

The inclusion of the materials in the following section is considered of immense importance to the full and extended understanding of some of the portions of the text.

Appendix A-The Search for a Methodology

Appendix B- Analysis of one Awo work that looks Skokian; IluNdun

Appendix C- Artists' Comments on Contemporary Nigerian Art

Appendix D- My Nigerian Representative's Comment on Limitations

The material presented in Appendix A, is an original work of this writer, written specifically to accompany the Recommendation, and to act as a facilitator toward its better understanding.

APPENDIX A

THE SEARCH FOR A METHODOLOGY; THE NEED FOR A TOTAL SEARCH

This writer, in 1998, decided to publish the article titled, “Searching for a Methodology”, in response to the desire of his students for a durable
methodology for the study of contemporary Nigerian art. This is not the methodology, but, rather, an attempt to call the attention of researchers to some pitfalls on the path of a thoroughly done work on the subject of contemporary art in Nigeria. The importance of this article stems from the fact that the absence of a good methodology has been fingered as the main culprit in the dearth of durable textbooks on contemporary Nigerian art. This article has aspired to open the eyes of researchers as to why many well intentioned and expensive research missions often end with mediocre textbooks. Over the years, scholars have made great efforts to determine the best way to research, understand, and appreciate Nigerian art, both traditional and contemporary. Their efforts have subsequently given rise to a great variety of classifications and methodologies, especially for the study of traditional art. However, not much success has been scored in the determination of an effective way of studying contemporary art, in such a way that its very intricate elements, both visual and conceptual, that have consistently contributed to the making of contemporary Nigerian art, could be ascertained and documented.

How can the true contemporary Nigerian art be studied effectively when most researchers are still abiding by the same paltry standards achieved by Evelyn Brown and Washington respectively in their works on contemporary African art of the mid sixties? The only important or additional development has been that scholars have concentrated on definite individual artists and their works, and have done reasonable analyses of the latter, so, instead of the
general surface study of the entire continent of Africa, effort is now made to concentrate on specific areas and artists respectively.

In the search for a methodology that would serve the study of the art of a group of artists (as in an art club, art school or among artists within the same national boundaries), the study of the works of a limited select group of artists, artists of, or from the same artistic tradition and period, could not possibly represent a national artistic tradition or creative tendency in all its ramifications. In the study of contemporary Nigerian art, it is evident from the works of art history scholars up to the present, that they seem to have formed the impression that Nigerian art, rode on the shoulders of, and can only be given an identity by those artists who in the pre-independence Nigeria, had called attention to themselves through an historic artistic revolution at Zaria. To most scholars of contemporary Nigerian art, the Zaria artists were all that mattered, are all that matter, and would be all that should matter in the study and determination of the status of contemporary Nigerian art. In some sense, the scholars are not to blame because there is paucity of serious literature on the other artists by the responsible ministry or organizations within the country.

But looking at the flip side, the scholars should be held responsible for haphazard research that fails to search into all the vital aspects of a particular art.

It is disheartening to find that an overwhelming majority of art history books dealing specifically on the contemporary Nigerian art, and they are few,
concentrated on the same artists, nearly all the time. From Frank Willet (1971) to Jean Kennedy (1993), interest and attention are focused on the Zaria School artists of the late fifties (great artists by all standards) and the Kuntu (traditionalist) and Awo (contemporist) artists exemplified very readily by the Oshogbo artists. Not much is heard about those artists who have carried further the Zarian revolution, and its great legacy, by disseminating very vigorously, the many artistic "isms" that have grown out of Zarianism, and have been giving them new and fresh expression. The closest that one could come to knowing the artists would be by looking in the directories of artists at the Smithsonian Institute Library of African art, a wonderful source compiled by the indefatigable Janet Stanley, the librarian. The irony, though, is that the Institute does not have the works of all these artists on exhibit. Perhaps, it is not the duty of the Institute to collect and exhibit sample works of contemporary Nigerian artists, but where are the researchers, those scholars whose area of interest is the Nigerian contemporary art? It is not an unsolved mystery that those who control research funding, and therefore those who receive it, are still more interested in the so-called exotic, traditional art of Africa, whose study claims nearly all art research funding.

Merrick Posnansky (1991)—quoted earlier in the introduction—called for some attention to be directed at contemporary African art through the allocation of research funding to the artists and scholars who are interested in and are working in those areas. He condemned the exaggerated interest of
Western scholars in traditional African art, and inferred that those individuals who have held the spotlight on traditional art of Africa are actually interested in the wealth that it brings. Dele Jegede (1983) also frowned on the partiality toward traditional art.

To decide for oneself whether Posnansky is right or wrong, one should look at the amount of research and literature on traditional art of Africa. One should also consider that no museum or gallery is known for its interest in or for the exhibit of contemporary African art. (Janet Stanley (1993), someone who should know and does know, confirmed this in her reply to a letter requesting a list of the museums and galleries with interest in contemporary Nigerian art.) The same is not true of traditional African art. Given very limited literature on contemporary African art, one would be right to presume that not much is being done and that the researchers seem satisfied with secondary data culled from previous studies and publications that are, on their own, limited in the amount of fact that they contain. This explains why over forty years after the Zaria revolution, the phenomenon that laid the foundation for the development and growth of Modern Nigerian art, not much is known about other Nigerian artists other than those that took part in the historic event. By projecting the same artists all the time, scholars are perpetrating the myth about the impotence of contemporary Nigerian art. Fortunately, the opposite is the case because contemporary Nigerian art is alive and fertile. If objectively compared against traditional art, an impartial observer would be convinced as
to the dominance of contemporary art, as the twentieth century completes its course.

During one of the many interviews preparatory to writing this chapter, a staff member of the Baltimore Museum reacting to a question by this writer as to why there was limited literature on contemporary Nigerian artists, but more directly why even recent publications, for example Jean Kennedy's, have chosen to discuss the very same artists that were the main issues in publications of the sixties and seventies, said that: "That is the case because younger artists are not as enterprising and have not produced a large body of work to call attention to themselves. The world is yet to see their works, and there has not been much shown in the United States either; as a matter of fact, I cannot remember seeing at anytime any work by a contemporary Nigerian artist."

Nothing can be more disheartening, and at the same time further from the truth; on the contrary, the "younger artists", using his term, have stopped at nothing to prove that they could take on the "masters" and, possibly, come out on top, both in the vigor, intensity, and power of their products to communicate intended impressions on the viewer. However, how can these other artists present their works to the world when the patrons of art, the financiers, connoisseurs, and even the scholars, still show an unmasked partiality for traditional art. Even within contemporary art, there is still an inclination toward the works of the old masters, who, through publicity, have established a
tremendous followership all over the world. Even the government of Nigeria does not show any keen interest. In reaction to its laid-back attitude, Boniface Okafor (1995) commented as follows: “The government of Nigeria does not do its duty to present, project, and promote Nigerian art, today, abroad; such as planning exhibitions…” Gbubemi Amas (1978), a painter out of the Nsukka School hoped that someone would be able someday to search beyond the great invisible wall and reach the enterprising newbreed artists, who have proved that they are in no way inferior to their masters and teachers. Thus, the question still remains unanswered. How can we design guiding principles, and how can we found a methodology for the study, and qualification of contemporary Nigerian art? This cannot be achieved by studying an insignificant percentage of the artist population, or from a group of artists of a fairly distant period. Could the Oshogbo School, on one hand, and the Zaria School of the late 50s on the other, objectively be called honest representatives of all the artists of all the periods of an extensive variety of art practices by groups and individual artists on the contemporary Nigerian art scene?

Many artists interviewed believe that there is an ongoing but silent battle between the "old masters" and their former students and successors who have successfully grown out of the shadows and influences of the former. This writer shares that view. Many are conscious about one area that the “old masters" seem to be in control; i.e., the allocation of commissions given by the
government establishments, and programs commissioned by foreign bodies. These, they believe, are conspiratorially shared among a very narrow circle of friends, who, though numerically small, wield an enormous amount of influence in government circles, using as tools their many friends and acquaintances.

If a truly effective methodology is to be found for the study of contemporary Nigerian art, interested scholars whose intentions are inspired by thirst for knowledge about the subject under study should free themselves from the stranglehold and partiality, conscious or unconscious, of previous studies and concern themselves with the *entire* field of contemporary Nigerian art. They should dig beyond the confines and rigidity of the style generally (but incorrectly) called modern art, and step into the arena of true contemporary art, where styles may only survive for a few weeks and months before they are overthrown by another style or even other styles.

There is a revolution that inspires this rapid birth, growth and death of styles, and it is the dynamics of this process that interested researchers should be looking at to find compatible factors that could be amalgamated to bring forth the much sought after way to study contemporary Nigerian art. This art is an artifact of culture and has become, like a culture, a living thing.

Contemporary Nigerian art should be seen as a living organism oxygenated by the passionate devotion of experimenting artists who work with the intention of discovering something new and unique. This spirit of experimentation gave birth to many art clubs, each with its own ambitions and
philosophies. These clubs spring to life steered by men and women with a
disdain for the status quo; some flower, others flounder. In life and even in
death, the new artistic ideologies persist and inspire more movements. This
situation transforms into a battlefield of ideas, where only the strong survive.
The ones that live do so not only by overpowering ingenuity born by the will to
survive, but also by the ability to serve the community that they are part of.

It was out of this war zone of artistic activities that one of the foremost
art clubs on the contemporary Nigerian art scene, a multinational and multi­
ethnic organization, AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artist, was born. Those that
objectively watched the growth of contemporary art in Nigeria were not
surprised at the explosion of ideas and the dizzying variety of styles that the
"Newbreed" artists initiated. Frank Willet (1971) foresaw this and predicted
that: "Western trained African artists are going through a stage of very varied
experimentation stimulated by the art traditions of other continents...African
artists are thus being absorbed into the cosmopolitan world of modern art,
which owes its character to the stimulus of Africa." For the new African art to
emerge, Willet continued, "African artists should turn more and more to the
artistic traditions of their ancestors." The Zaria School first called for the return
to the traditions of African ancestors for artistic inspiration; the essence of their
being. Willet was only endorsing *synthesis* in a way. The artists have
responded positively, turning to the traditions of their ancestors for fresh
inspiration. That is how western European technique converges with the
traditional Nigerian/African essence in the construction of contemporary
Nigerian art of all ramifications.

How then can an effective methodology be established?

We have seen and tested too many recommendations as to how to study, and
appreciate Contemporary African/Nigerian art. Different Schools of Thought
have presented very varied recipes, but the appetites of researchers seem
not to be appeased.

It appears that the outcome, as one would expect, is confusion. The
question then arises: Among these many contributions, which one is
dependable? Which ones teach us what contemporary African/Nigerian art is
and how to appreciate it? Which tells us the better way(s) to study, and to
teach it?

This state of confusion that characterizes contemporary African art is
evident in a work by Delange (1969) wherein she attempts to help proper
understanding of contemporary African art for the audience in an exhibition.
When her effort at articulation appears unproductive and ineffective, she
writes, seemingly frustrated, that:

An alternative walk among the works exhibited shows how difficult it is
to find adequate principles of classification for contemporary African
artworks.

As a solution to this problem she points out that:

It would be preferable to begin a long serious biographical study of the
exhibiting artists [by] trying to understand the dosages of Traditional and
Occidental influences that have caused the art.
However, convinced as to the foolhardiness in this approach, she confesses that:

This approach, the only one that seems justifiable, will demand a great deal of time and much wider experience than we have both in African and Worldwide contemporary art, if it is to avoid wallowing in the mire of normative aesthetics. (ibid, p.8)

It was in the middle of this kind of confusion that a great gust of wind of relief blew from the studies of Professor E. Okechukwu Odita. He conceived and propounded theories and principles that could benefit the description, definition and discussion of African arts. It was the lack of such principles of classification that once held Delange and others at bay in their studies of contemporary African art.

Odita (1980, pp. 4-9) identifies four categories of contemporary African art namely; Bintu (or Survivalist) art, Kuntu (or Traditionalist) art, Awo (or Contemporist) art, and Skokian (or Realistic) art. Odita's studies and findings are very much in line with Beier's (1968). They are a caution light to researchers in contemporary African arts. Both scholars called for vigorous scholarship, vigorous planning, vigorous methodology and vigorous reporting of research findings. The research by Odita was executed in a scientific manner, an approach defined by Odita as one in which the researcher is able to:

1. Establish a suitable chronology
2. Determine appropriate reference frames for terms used
3. Understand the range, the variability, and the differences in artistic processes as a function of culture, and
4. Comprehend the uniformities, and the pan-culture consistencies
in artistic and aesthetic processes so that valid generalizations can be made about human artistic and aesthetic functioning.

Odita (1991) put forward a caveat that could be a safe spring-board, saying: “Often an issue reflects the ongoing concerns of the period or age that the artist has conceived in his work, the nature of which could be found on two tonal levels, overt and subtle, although at times, both could coexist in one work of art.” The researcher is obligated to search out these tonal levels, to be able to establish his work on a firm base. Explaining what he calls 21st Century art History, Odita claims that;

The main point of a future art historical knowledge is rather simple in essence yet profound in implications: art history to be practiced by professional academicians will occur with a contemporary art context—art historical knowledge tied to the study of contemporary artists rather than the Old Masters. By attempting to come to grips with the basis of art historians’ theories and activities, a study of practicing contemporary artists may lead to greater self understanding. Odita suggested also that:

It is of value to consider the study of visual art within the framework of contemporary artists’ activities, their visual sources as a profound human knowledge and experience, and their contributions through problem solving of current issues, to the development of the contemporary history of art as a discipline.

Researchers should also focus in on the visual issues of the contemporary artist’s works, "and on the dissemination of the knowledge and experience of their activities."

It is the opinion of some scholars, Odita inclusive, that for the primary issues to be considered in the study of the arts, both traditional and contemporary African arts, emphasis should be on the internal rather than
external evidence of the work. When this is done, Odita opines: "An art historical methodology finally evolves: that which discourages the investigation of art from external sources only." How does one get beyond the external evidence into the internal evidence of a work? Extensive readings of materials connected with the issues prepares the researcher for a thorough academic venture as he/she gets more intimate with the culture and tradition of the community within and for which the artist creates. This line of thought is not a recent concept. Departments of Fine and Applied Arts students in Universities in Nigeria are expected to complete about six credits or more of French language. The reason for this is obvious since most modern trends in art took place in France resulting in a great majority of literature on those trends being written about the French genre, country-side and life in general, and, in the French language. If university authorities in Nigeria thought it wise for art students to study foreign languages to facilitate better understanding of world art history, should foreign scholars interested in the study of contemporary Nigerian art not be expected to take courses in basic traditional cultural practices of the people living in their area of study?

It is the feeling of this writer that one of the very significant impediments on the path of research in Africa/Nigeria is the researcher's deficiency with the culture, especially the language of communication of the non-Western people that they are working on. However, the biggest problem that foreign scholars face in the understanding and interpretation of contemporary Nigerian art is in
coming to grips with the internal evidence of the works. This evidence is always conceptual and not visual; that means that it is not discernible on the surface of the work, but has to be searched for within the work. Sometimes it amounts to the proverbial 'searching for a needle in a haystack'. The only difference in this case is that a trained observer will be able to find the 'needle'; the evidence. This evidence (as stated) can only be located by those who have been properly 'trained' in the traditions and cultures of the peoples being studied. The importance of this kind of preparatory study is strongly emphasized by Willet (1971) who said that:

The most significant studies on traditional African art are those of limited scope dealing with the art of a single society or area of Africa, findings that are generalized to include the whole continent of Africa.

Encouraging more research, Willet warns that:

Though we have writings that help us to enjoy African art,...yet they are in some ways fallible guides, for they start from the premise of the Western idea of beauty and all too often express themselves ethnocentrically.

Rene Wassing (1968), in his support of this point of view, stated that:

"Whenever we nonAfricans talk of African art, we apply, however we may try to avoid it...the standards we are accustomed to in our own culture."

The call for a thorough understanding of the cultures of a non Western people before any significant work could be done in that area provoked Roy Seiber's (1993) retort. It is commendable, however, that Seiber eventually was convinced that a methodology that would prove effective in the study of art:

should include such things as concepts of the objects, form, style, technique, use, aesthetic, meaning, iconograph, the author, history ,
time, place, all that sort of thing...

It is the hope of this writer that the above prescription, if faithfully followed, would yield the methodology that, in turn, would facilitate the much needed detailed study of contemporary Nigerian art so that in any work under review all the external and internal information about it would be revealed.

With the extensive information collected from a cross section of all contemporary Nigerian art styles, the visual as well as the conceptual elements of the contemporary Nigerian art would be laid bare, and the essence and value of contemporary Nigerian art would be easily fathomed.
APPENDIX B

ANALYSIS OF AN AWO STYLE WORK WHICH AT A GLANCE LOOKS SKOKIAN

ILU N DUN (Talkative)

Yisa Akimbolaji

FIGURE 3.16

This typical Neo-Skokian painting, in its theme and its impressionistic presentation, conveys that vibrancy that is found in the spirit of Rococo art. It is full of life and good spirit, evidenced in the activities taking place, as well as in the colors and in the general design of the picture. Ilun Ndun is so close to Skokian style that only a trained observer can tell it apart. The fact is that the painting is a vivid example of the Awo style.

The organization of the visual components is compelling; for example, in the contrasts between geometric shapes, between straight lines and circular shapes, or, simply, between rectilinear and curvilinear and biomorphic shape. Approximately symmetrically arranged, the figures would have conveyed a feeling of monotony and boredom to a viewer if the artist had not counter-balanced the three talking-drummers moving from right to left of the picture with the left to right moving figure of the Praise singer/maracas player. Colors are related to the point of monotony, an element that cooperates with the
mathematical spacing of the figures to create a feeling of dormancy. Though the colors are bright, the attitudes of the figures are contradictory to the suggested festive occasion. Even if this were a funeral ceremony, the only occasion that could possibly call for such a mournful predisposition of the celebrants, there would have still been a contradiction in that funerals, in the traditional African concept, are usually celebrated with dark textile products.

The brushstrokes are not discernible except in areas where the artist suggested decorative motifs or folds, but the introduction of insignificant areas of variety in colors and chiaroscuro created a significant visual interest and vitality. Geometric shapes, as in the drums and belts, have been contrasted with the more organic shapes of the human limbs and caps to add to this variety of elements. Thus, the painting succeeds although the work appears unfinished, a quality that could be rationalized as born out of the artist's interest in impressionism. Once it is established that this artist is operating within a style quite different from the Skokian, it becomes easy to understand indeed that his style is Awo, one of the two principal Neo-Skokian styles.

A flowing movement in the work is not sustained as the eye fails to make the necessary smooth transition from one motif in the pattern to another without running into divides or spaces that resemble chasms separating one element of motif from another. The artist dutifully avoids any overlapping; a feature that would have suggested Skokian style. To the left, the eye travels faster, running into different accents and pauses. This difficulty in moving
around the painting along consistent paths of movement lines creates the feeling of broken musical notes, lacking rhythm, in spite of the loud melody emitting from the three drums in the hands of these masters of the art of drumming.

It is surprising that the intense light that has made so much impression on the instruments and the interior of the painting did not affect the musicians, whose pensive and fixed gazes suggest intense concentration upon the task at hand; i.e. keeping the music harmonious. The interior light blazing in the center of the work, and reminiscent of Titians' or Carravaggio's 'divine' light, queries the Skokianess of the painting, and establishes it firmly as Awo Style. The light adds to the notion that the activity is taking place in an enclosed place, a cave or grotto, a feeling that is further heightened by the impression of the arched doorway which has framed and enclosed the subjects, acting as a set of visual parenthesis. This absence of enough shade or dark shadows, which have been dissolved by the light, depreciates the three dimensional quality of the figures and throws them into faint silhouettes, thus, robbing the painting of the dynamism that a theme like this would have had if treated in the Skokian style. In the absence of shadows, a vacuum is created for a feeling of stasis, dormancy, or complete lifelessness in the entire work. In spite of the faithful representation of perspective, and the lightening of colors in the distant figures in the middle and backgrounds (a feature that should have accented linear perspective), the work is still deficient of depth.
The maracas player portrayed as the singer should have been the most visually imposing of all the figures, since the work took its title from him. Instead he is shown as a subordinate figure to the most imposing of the musicians, the Drummer at the forefront. This presentation of the Singer/maracas player does not leave much clue as to who he is since his profile face does not show any convincing attribute of a singer.

From a Skokian perspective, the arrangement of the figures as a whole does not seem to have been seriously thought out. Each does not compliment the rest. The artist avoided overlapping, an element that would have neutralized the works claim to Awoness. However, this lack of cooperation with one another, a quality of the Awo style, makes the performers look like individual players satisfied with personal presentations and not interested in achieving a common harmony or melody, as a band or group. Is it possible that Ilu Ndun is the drum player at the foreground or is it the talking drum? If not, why did this drummer and his instrument receive maximum, studious and realistic presentation as in Skokian style. Could this be the talkative drum and its player? Since the drum actually "talks", or is made to talk, could it then be the one that actually does the praising? It is also on this imposing figure and his instrument that the artist showed some 'understanding' of chiaroscuro and texture, elements of Skokian art style. The intense value contrast, considering the nature of this work, creates a sharp to subtle divide between the two figures at the front, the two at the left and the one at the far
right in the middle ground. Light appears to be flooding the scene from a strong source, affecting and drenching the two figures at the back, and robbing them of their three dimensionality. Richard Pumphery (1996) describes a similar situation thus:

There is so much light coming from the light source and bouncing off of all the figures receiving light that there is no subtlety of tonal transition. The surface of the forms are flooded with direct and reflected light and everything appears flattened since the "expected" or "normal" three dimensional schemes have been altered by an unnaturally strong or unusually close light source.

Pumphery's statement applies to Ilu Ndun, around which an argument ensued as to its Skokianess. It looks Skokian, but is it? Controversy centered on how much the faint figures are distant from the distinctly vivid, razor sharp, crispness of an authentic Skokian figure. Basically, the problem, unknown to many observers, is the intense multi-sourced lighting of the scene; a feature that completely eliminated the features by dissolving their outlines, especially the facial, that would have given discernible character to the figures. A Skokian style work would have exhibited one identifiable light source.

Ilu Ndun is a creation of an artist who first understood the representation of nature realistically before he explored other artistic possibilities.

Our usual experience, Pumphery explained, is to experience a world illuminated from one light source, the Sun. However, if multiple light sources cast multiple shadows (which are not dark enough), traditional or conventional concepts of light and dark are altered, thus abstracting our
perception of the subject matter. This does not in any significant way alter the fact that the artist has presented an image that existed in reality, only in this instance, differently from the way that it truly appeared in reality, the way that a Skokian artist would have seen it. Ilu Ndun as an Awo style painting, which it is, is successful, but as Skokian, it is not. Fitzano Greggoire, a connoisseur, summarized the work thus:

The music plays, slow and low. The drummers lit aglow. The Singer sings but in a whisper. The environment is gay; but the celebrants are mournful, the air, light and costume, disagreeing with their mood...
APPENDIX C

ARTISTS’ RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION ON CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ART

The only optional question in my research questionnaire (appendix III) required the artists to comment on the issue of Contemporary Nigerian Art. Some of their responses are reproduced below;

Dr. Chike Aniakor, Professor,
Department of Fine Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Dwindling professionalism-absence of professional/creative dedication; haste to acquire reputation without cutting necessary artistic/creative teeth.

Dr. Okoli,
Art Education Specialist, University of Nigeria Nsukka

Contemporary Nigerian art is a synthesis between traditional Nigerian art and Western art. The marriage of the two creates a modern art work that is acceptable, both in Nigeria and Overseas.

Dr. Godson Diogu,
Lecturer, Department of Fine Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Contemporary Nigerian art is seen as a synthesis of traditional and
modern ideas, forms and materials. The synthesis has helped in the production of visual art which is relevant to our present level of development in material and technique.

El Anatsui, Professor,

Department of Fine Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Lack of the right conditions and severe constraints might eventually lead even the most gifted and original of artists to survivalist commercialism, which will kill the soul of the practice, sooner or later.

Boniface BOK Okafor, Senior Lecturer

Department of Fine & Applied Art

Federal Polytechnic Oko, Nigeria

The government of Nigeria does not do its duty to Present, Project and Promote Nigerian art, today, abroad; such as planning exhibitions for individual groups, and sponsoring participants in international exhibitions and art festivals/competitions.

Okey Ikenegbu, Lecturer

Department of Fine and Applied Art

Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu, Nigeria

Nigerian art is the expression of inner self, and the artist has to be free to create accordingly. There should be no restrictions or limitations. The flow has to be consistent and uninterrupted, because art is life
Prince Orji Uwakaname (Artist)

Secretary, African Advancement Council, UK; Secretary General, Pan-African guild of Artists, UK.

It is important for the artist to involve the Press in all their outing. If they do, they must arm themselves with already written handout, or face negative impression of their intention.

Obiora Anidi, Senior, Sculptor

Department of Art education

Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

A young Igbo child will usually tell his playmates, "Biko, Malu onwe gi (i.e. Please, know or mind yourself) whenever one is offended by the other.

The above philosophy is of benefit to the Nigerian artists, Art historians, Critics, collectors, etc.

Chris Afuba, Sculptor

Department of Art Education, Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu

There is great need to sensitize contemporary Nigerian artists towards the production of Art for art sake. The present trend of rushing on with the trend of materialism does not augur well with the production of essential masterpieces of our time.
Nsikak Essien, former Lecturer,
now Freelance Artist-Lagos

Commercialization—with the present extended family system to be
catered for, the meal ticket-syndrome, the wrong values embraced by artists
(which require financial sponsorship) [means that] the artist is now forced to
play and dance to the tunes of the money-bags. Somehow, these money-bags
influence what is created.
APPENDIX D

MY REPRESENTATIVES IN NIGERIA COMMENT ON THEIR LIMITATIONS

Ndubuisi Madu

Post-Graduate School (Political Science)

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

It was during one of my visits in the middle of last year to Lagos that my sister, Mavis (this writer's representative in Lagos), talked about her difficulties in getting some professors, lecturers, and experts, to answer the questionnaire, so I decided to assist her. I collected ten copies, but was able to recover five copies duly answered, with photos attached, though some are photocopies and bad quality photos. The rest got lost at the hands of the lecturers. You see, Luck was a little bit not on our side. I collected these questionnaires at the peak of the University/College lecturers strike out here, and the eventual stoppage of their salaries. People like Dr. O.O., who claimed that he supervised your first degree project, was not quite cooperative, and he did not return his own questionnaire, claiming to have lost it in the face of hunger and strike action. This strike lasted for four months, and most of the lecturers are still to be reinstated as the government at the peak of the strike sacked them. It is a long story. Moreover, the departmental photographer just
underwent an eye operation, and can hardly find negatives. It was frustrating.

In closing Mr. Madu says; Please sir, take the situation as you see it, things are quite difficult out here, and most of these lecturers engage in private practices to make ends meet.

Dr. Diogu (the writer’s classmate at the university), for one, was very happy; he assisted me a lot. You may wish to write him. Some of the people that you relied on for assistance out here, were not forthcoming; e.g., P.U. and the like. The degree of selfishness is high out here.

Nsikak Essien-

Enugu, Nsukka-Lagos

I got your letter ending of January (I wonder how come it got here so late because your letter is dated Nov. of last year). Artist response was very poor—seems almost everyone hates filling these forms. Other artists kept saying do not come today, come tomorrow. Always excuses. I got some forms back, but no photos. My brother, all these artists are the same. I think maybe they have their exhibition schedules all mapped out (filling out forms) seems like a distraction. My brother, this has been an experience. I thought I was the only artist who hated filling forms!