

Self-Portraits in Enigmatic Contexts

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Abstract

In this study, the researcher applied a seemingly illogical impossibility of juxtaposing his own likeness on recognizable historical characters to create a sense of enigma and to awaken the sensibilities of other researchers in the realm of psychology so far as irrationality of the modern psyche and existence are concerned. He starts by borrowing portraits of recognizable personalities from European artistic sources as the basis for his argument. However, reference is made also to sculpture with regard to African societies like Egypt, Nok, Ife and Benin portraiture. The images selected by the artist for this painterly experiments have been categorized under three phases. They include;

- a) Phase one - transposing the artist's features onto an original historical character.
- b) Phase two - imposing the artist's own innate style or technique onto the original image.
- c) Phase three - imitating the style of the original painting or image which inspired the artist's prototype.

An artist or researcher's philosophical comment is provided to help rationalize the use of enigmatic imagery in this project by questioning and answering some irrational and illogical actions in man's existence. He tries to establish the link between this experiment and the philosophy of art movements like Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism by spelling out the rationale behind this project and reviewing of works by famous artists who belong to the above -mentioned movements. The experiments are conducted using modern artist oil as well as industrial commercial paints as the main mediums. Illustrations in photographic sequential images have been provided to help the reader gain a rough idea of how the artist arrived at the final works. The next section of the thesis seeks to analyze and describe the results of the artist's output, where the artist's works are arranged side by side with the original image for easy comparisons.

The eighteen paintings produced by the artist projects the researcher in different character roles made up as an African ancestor ,an Emperor, King, famous artist, an Italian Renaissance Magistrate, just to mention a few. Details of this project are spelt out in four chapters with the appropriate sub- headings under each chapter.

Keywords: Enigma, Psyche, Portraiture, Juxtaposing, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Futurism.

INTRODUCTION

Portrait painting has been one of the ways of depicting resemblance of people for various reasons. These may be for recognition, pride, vanity, decoration, nostalgia, recording purposes, aesthetic pleasure, psychological evaluation of features and so on. This research aims at using the researcher's own portrait by projecting his image in various historical modes for the sake of novelty and other irrational reasons.

Portraits of personalities in European history will be used to establish the link of this researcher's painterly experiments with adaptations from European artistic sources. This is because European art history has a long tradition of techniques, styles and subject in painting worth tapping. Some selected portraits produced in these periods will be used as a basis for the argument of applying the researcher's image as a subject for the project. However, since European art history is broad some portraits painted in European historical context will be selected for the researcher's experiment. Since Africa does not have an extensive tradition in portrait painting, only meagre historical references would be made to the continent. References however would be made to sculpture in regard to Egypt, Nok, Ife and Benin portraiture. In addition to the above, this project will be executed in three stylistic trends. They include;

- Phase one – transposing my features onto an original historical character or image.
- Phase two - imposing my own innate style or technique onto the original image.
- Phase three - Imitating the style of the original image which inspired my prototype.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Irrationality has been one of the means of artistic novelty and expression of contemporary international art. The researcher is applying an illogical impossibility of juxtaposing his own likeness on recognised historical characters to create a sense of enigma. How to make this exchange convincing is the problem and succeeding implies achieving results.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. The aim of the project is to create an enigma through the paintings that would be puzzling to a viewer. It would awaken other researchers in the realm of psychology so far as irrationality of modern

- sensibilities and existence are concerned.
2. To write a report on the project work.

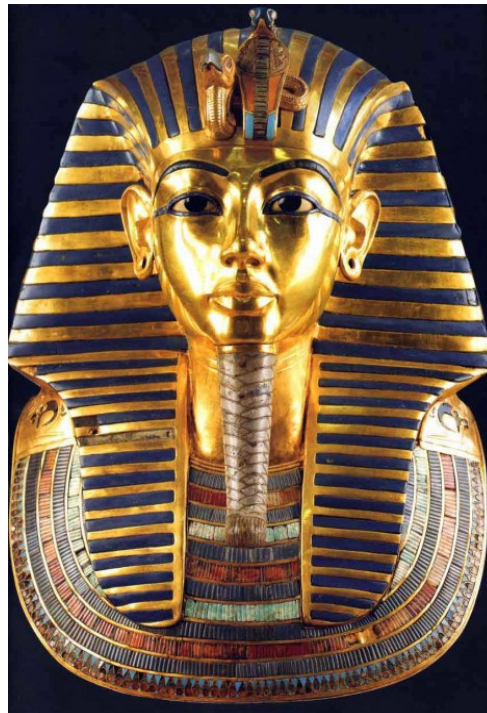
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Though Africa has a long tradition in portraiture, generally in sculpture and painting it was not extensively recorded as European tradition of portraiture. The famous cubist painter, Pablo Picasso imbibed African sculptural idioms to formulate cubism which is two dimensional .The researcher will apply the same idea in imbibing the past great portraits in both painting and sculpture into a contemporary context. The researcher will take inspiration from selected famous paintings of the old masters as well as sculpture from the African continent. Considering the fact that Africa does not have a long tradition in portrait painting, the researcher is forced to take inspiration from European portrait painting. Due to globalization the world is becoming smaller, for that reason there is cross cultural interactions, therefore the researcher has no qualms borrowing aspects of European or Western Art for his own digestion just as Picasso did vise versa with African art.

Segy (1975, p 118) stated that, “African art at its best is aesthetically comparable to the product of the best periods in history of art”. Considering the level of craftsmanship in the art works of Egypt, Nok, Ife and Benin Cultures, Segy was right to compare African art to the World History of Art. African art is mainly produced considering the belief of the society in which it is produced. The above societies thus Egypt, Nok, Ife and Benin cultures have produced numerous artworks which serve various functions in their societies.

Egypt can be located in the north eastern part of Africa. Artworks produced by the Egyptians includes the Sphinx, Pyramids , Hierakonpolis ,Bust of Nefertiti, Plate of Narmer and the Death Mask of Tutankhamen, just to mention a few. Having studied pictures of artworks mentioned above, the researcher considers that the most appropriate Egyptian artwork for juxtapositioning his own likeness on recognizable historical character is the Death Mask of Tutankhamen.

FIGURE 1



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tutankhamen>

Title: Death Mask of Tutankhamen

Medium: Gold, coloured glass and semiprecious stones.

Size: 54cm high.

Adams (1994) observes that, Tutankhamen’s mask was made up of solid gold, blue stone and coloured glass. The blue glass was known as” Lapis Lazuli” in Egypt. According to Adams, the Egyptians valued the stone because it had to be imported from Iran and Afghanistan. From the researcher’s analysis, Tutankhamen’s Death Mask is moulded from the head to the bust, while the blue stone is seen arranged linearly .However, the blue glass on the top side of the head gear downwards are horizontal. On the forehead of the mask are a cobra and a vulture, while a horn- like object is fixed to the chin of the Pharaoh. The lower side of the head cloth which drops down to the chest represents the wings of the gods. The emblems seen on the forehead, thus a cobra and a vulture are supposed to protect the King from evil spirits. From the chest to the base are coloured glass which are

red, orange and green. The researcher dreams he would have a golden- like face to be admired by people around him like Tutankhamen’s Death Mask.

Fagg (1959) also believes that, the Nok Culture was the earliest manufacturer of terracotta in sub –Sahara Africa and came into existence around 1000Bc. It is believed that Nok culture developed into the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife. The Culture also produces images of animals as part of their art works, for which the purpose is still not known. One of their most fascinating artworks is their Human head in terra-cotta. Features associated with Nok Culture sculpture head includes, the treatment of the eyes, which forms a triangular shape with eyebrow above looking like an oval cut into two. The lips are slightly opened creating a hollow circle while the pupil on the other hand is pierced. The straight nose and sloping forehead are all characteristics of the Nok culture sculpture heads. One fascinating feature on the sculpture piece is the representation of the hairstyle. This can be seen looking like mountains. The artist wished his image or head will be given much reverence and attention like the Nok culture head, so that he will feel noble and a little pompous.

Segy (1975, p188) stated that, “Ife culture was the source and spiritual centre of the Yoruba nation”. Ife is an ancient Yoruba city in South–western Nigeria. Most of the art works produced by the society were made of Bronze and Terra-cotta. It is believed that the lost wax technique was the most sophisticated method of casting while most of the heads had similar styles and designs. Looking at the images of terra-cotta heads, there are incisions on the faces. Holes are seen along the hair lines on the forehead, mouth and around the chin area.

It is believed that the holes created on the faces of the terra-cotta heads held human hair. This is one of the few sculpture heads which attracted the researcher’s attention and will therefore be borrowed for this project. The eyes are depicted opened but the pupils are not clearly seen while the nose and mouth of the figure are depicted to look real such that it attracts attention of the viewer. Ife terra-cotta heads are given thick necks as a strong base for the head to rest on. The artist hypothetically dreams he had features like the Ife sculpture head.

FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3



Source: <http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/hjdrewal/Nok.html>

Medium: Terra-cotta Size: Life Size

Medium: Terra-cotta, Size: Life Size

Figures 2 and 3 are example of Nok culture sculpture heads described in the first paragraph of page 7.

The pictures on page 9, labelled Figure 4 and 5 are examples of sculpture heads produced by the Ife society.

FIGURE 4



FIGURES 5



Source: http://www.afrikanet.info/menu/kultur/datum/2009/06/23/are-major-africa-art-_exhibitions-only-for-the-western-world-the-case-of-ife-art-exhibiton.

Medium: Terra-cotta
Size: Life size

Medium: Terra-cotta
Size: Life size

Ezra (1992, p1) stated that, “Benin art is made to glorify the divine King or Oba and to honour the great Kings of the past”. This means that the Benin culture produced their artworks to serve their rulers and ancestors. It is the dream and wish of the researcher to have his image glorified just as the Benin glorified their rulers. Most of the heads produced were life size, where some of the heads were depicted wearing crowns carefully designed with cross-hatching-like effect befitting a King or a traditional ruler. The Benin artist made marks on the forehead and sometimes around the cheeks of the figure. Some of the heads have vertical marks all over the face, while the eyes are depicted widely opened with the pupil. The nose, nostrils and lips are also designed beautifully to look real. Sometimes beads are depicted around the neck of the figure such that the mouth is almost covered. It is believed that if the mouth is left bare the power of the ruler will be too great. The figure is sometimes given a thick neck to act as a base for the head to rest on.

Furthermore, the artist wishes his face will have a brass or bronze-like effect and the face will shine when polished. The pictures below labelled, Figure 6, 7 and 8 represents sculpture heads produced by the Benin



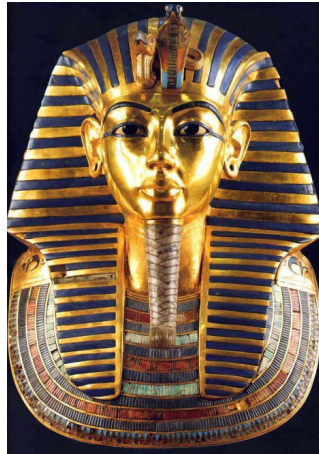
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_art.

Medium: Bronze
Size: Life size

To add to the above, it is a fact that portrait painting is a genre in painting and has been accepted in our society after colonial rulers left us that art-form. College trained artists, street artists and other artisans are practising it. The researcher in the past has undertaken portrait painting as a project in his field of study. The images labeled figures 9 and 10 below are examples of portrait painting projects undertaken by the researcher. The two images are made up of different styles and techniques. The style used in painting figure 9 is the artist's own innate style, the brush strokes while figure 10 is also made up of the classical style of painting. These styles will however be employed in some painterly experiments which will be carried out later.

PICTURES FOR THE RESEARCHER'S ARGUMENT

FIGURE 11



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tutankhamun>

Title: Death Mask of Tutankhamen

Medium: Gold, coloured glass and semiprecious stones.

Size: 54cm high.

The image above is the Golden Death Mask of Tutankhamen an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, which has been described in pages 5 and 6 of Chapter 2.

FIGURE 12



Source: <http://.Iss.wisc.edu/hjdrewal/Nok.html>

Title: A Sculpture piece from the Nok culture

Medium: Terra-cotta

Size: Life Size

The image labeled Figure 12 is one of the sculpture pieces chosen by the researcher for his painterly experiment.

FIGURE 13



Source: <http://wysinger.homestead.com/benin.html>

Title: Benin Sculpture Head

Medium: Bronze

Size: Life Size

Figure 13 is Benin sculpture head which has already been described .This picture has been categorized under phase one of this painterly experiment.

FIGURE 14



Source: The-western-world-the-case-of-ife-art-exhibition/

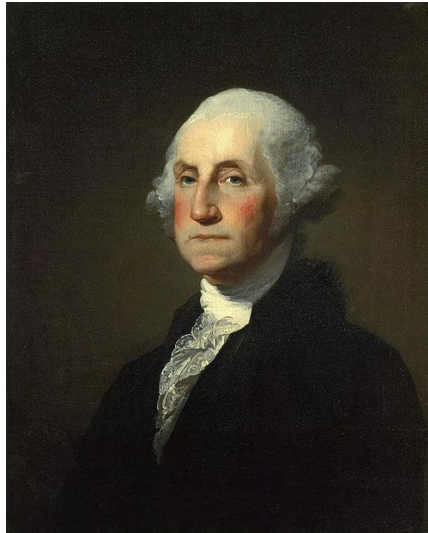
Title: Ife Sculpture

Medium: Terra-cotta

Size: Life Size

Figure 14 is an image of Ife sculpture head described by the researcher in Chapter2 which has also been classified under phase 1.

FIGURE 15



Source: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fi%C8%99ier:Gilbert_Stuart_William_Portrait_of_George_Washington.jpg

Title: Portrait of George Washington (1755-1828)

Artist: Gilbert Stuart Williamstown

Medium: Oil on Canvas

Size: 73.5cmx61.1cm (29inx24in)

Above is an image of a famous painting of George Washington. The researcher has provided a source where the picture can be found.

FIGURE 16



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans_Hals

Title: Laughing Cavalier (1624)

Artist: Frans Hals

Medium: Oil on Canvas

Size: 83cm x 67cm (33inx26in)

Figure 16 is a masterpiece of the Laughing Cavalier. Since the painting is very famous the researcher thinks there is no need to repeat what art historians have said instead, the source, title, artist, size and medium have been provided.

FIGURE 17



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Gainsborough.

Title: The Blue Boy (1770)

Artist: Thomas Gainsborough

Medium: Oil on Canvas

Size: 178cm x 122cm (70.08 in x 48.03in)

The Blue Boy is one of the paintings classified under phase 3 by the researcher.

FIGURE 18



Source: <http://www.azerbaijanrugs.com/mp/eworth1.htm>.

Title: Henry VIII, (1565)

Artist: Hans Eworth

Medium: Oil on Canvas

Size: 229cm x 124.1 cm (90inx48in)

The image of King Henry VIII needs no introduction by the artist or researcher. The artist has provided all important details of the painting above.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

This chapter involves the steps of procedure and stylistic trends used in juxtaposing and superimposing my likeness on recognizable historical characters. With the aid of a digital camera, images of stages in the paintings will be taken to help the viewer understand how the final works were executed and achieved. However, steps and procedures used in achieving the final work of some of the paintings will not be shown. This is due to the fact that the steps are the same, and so images which have similar steps will be summarized to avoid monotony and overloading of data.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS USED

TOOLS

Bristle brushes, sable brushes of all sizes and shapes, ruler, pencil, chalk, easel, pallet knife, pallet, rag, plastic container, eraser, tack nails, wire mesh, digital camera and measuring tape.

MATERIALS

Acrylic paint, artist oil paint, industrial home enamels, linseed oil, turpentine (artist/industrial), canvas, stretchers, sketch pad, combination of carpenter's white glue and white emulsion paint.

THE PICTURES BELOW EXPLAIN THE EXPERIMENT CONDUCTED BY THE ARTIST.

(PHASE ONE)

PLATE 1(Step1)



PLATE 2(Step2)

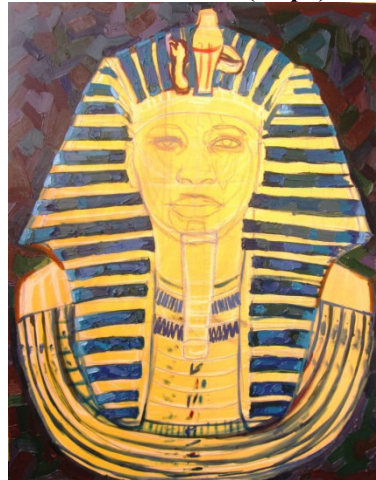


PLATE 3(Step 3)



PLATE 4 (Step 4)

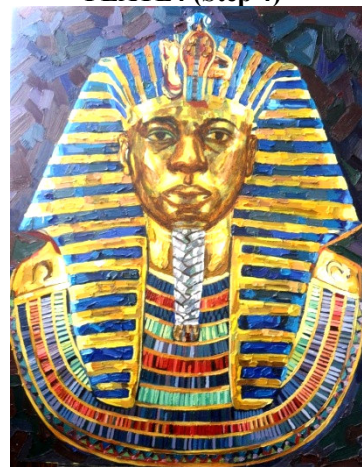


PLATE 5(Step 5)



PLATE 6(Step6)



Plate 1 and 2 represents the first two steps of transpositioning my features onto an image of the “Golden Death Mask of Tutankhamen” which is three-dimensional. I transcribed myself onto the image of Tutankhamen in a two-dimensional format of easel painting which is part of the phase one category. Using an image of both Tutankhamen and mine as references, a sketch of my image was made wearing the head gear of Tutankhamen in chalk after which corrections were made in the sketch with a pencil. With the brush stroke technique, mixtures of reds, blues, yellows and titanium white were used to paint the background before concentrating on the dark tones on the head cloth of the Pharaoh which is in thick blue horizontal and vertical lines.

Having painted the background and darker tones in the head gear, I went on to paint the golden parts of the head cloth using shades of yellow, browns and purple. At the same time demarcations were made on the face for darker tones and on the chest to represent coloured glass and semi-precious stones. The picture labelled plate3 is a photographic representation of this explanation. Furthermore, the small rectangles and squares on the chest representing the coloured glass was painted using red, blues, yellows and white. At the same time thin golden lines were drawn at the upper and lower parts of the coloured stones to separate them, after which the emblem on the forehead and the horn-like object under the chin were painted in plate 4. Plates 5 and 6 represent the final steps where the face of the artist was painted gradually from the darkest to the lightest tones. Unlike the background, small bristle brushes were used in painting the face because of the size of the head and also to help paint the nostrils, lips, eyes, ears and eyebrows. Colours used include purples, azo yellow deep, cadmium red, cerulean blue and titanium white. Finishing touches were then added to the figure, especially on the face and head cloth.

PLATES 7 (Step1)

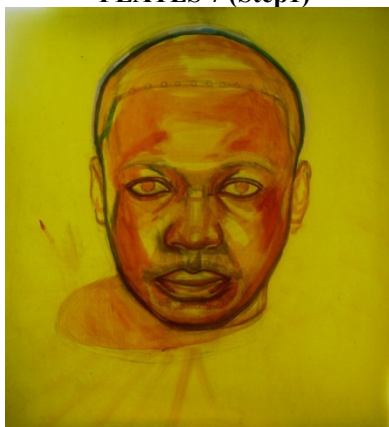


PLATE 8(Step2)



PLATE9 (Step3)



PLATE10 (Step4)

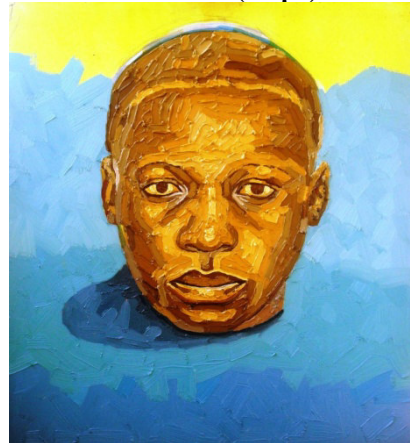


PLATE 11(Step 5)



The images above represent steps and styles used in transcribing myself into the image of Ife sculpture head. My first approach to this task was to make a sketch of my own image in acrylic adding the light and shade in other to make the painting simpler. I went on to apply the oils which was made up of a mixture of burnt sienna and purple on to the sketch using my own style which is the brush stroke technique. Plates 7 and 8 are photographic representations of the explanations above. The next step was to apply the colours representing the middle tone which is made up of different shades of yellow ochre before painting the high light areas on the face. Cerulean blue was mixed with titanium white to paint the background of the figure. Ultramarine was also used in painting the shadow cast by the sculpture piece. Plate 9 and 10 represents the explanation above. The final step was to add finishing touches to make it look more attractive as seen in plate 11.

PLATE 12 (Step 1)



PLATE 13 (Step 2)

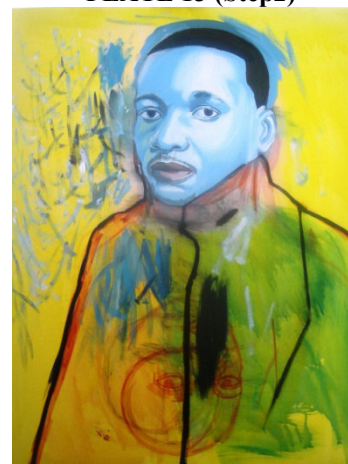


PLATE 14(Step 3)



PLATE 15(Step4)



These are photographic images of the steps used in painting my version of the “Blue period” self-portrait by Pablo Picasso. The first step was to make an acrylic sketch of myself wearing the costume of the personality in the original painting after which the face was painted using ultramarine blue, titanium white, cerulean blue and red for the lips . These are evident in plates 12 and 13. The next approach was to paint the background in the painting using the same colour scheme used for the face of the figure before proceeding to the overcoat worn by the figure with a mixture of blue and yellow. Plates 14 and 15 represent the explanation above.

PHASE TWO

PLATE 16(Step1)



PLATE 17(Step2)



PLATE 18(Step 3)



PLATE 19 (Step 4)



PLATE 20(Step 5)



PLATE 21(Step 6)



Plates 16 and 17 are the first and second steps used in painting my version of the “Laughing Cavalier”. The first step was used to make a sketch of my image wearing the costume of the personality in the original image in pencil. I proceeded by painting the face of the figure by using mixtures of burnt sienna, purple, cadmium red deep, cadmium yellow, ultramarine blue and titanium white. Just as the face of the Pharaoh was painted from the darkest tone to the high light, the same style was used to paint the face of the artist in the experiment with a different colour scheme, while a small brush was used in painting details on the face.

Secondly, the costume worn by the personality in the painting was painted using mixtures of colours like ultramarine blue, purples, cobalt blue, cadmium red deep, cadmium yellow deep and titanium white. From the figure it is evident that the attire was made up of dark colour scheme excluding the ornamental designs. Therefore care had to be taken in mixing the colours because the dark colours had variations in them. In short, the darker tones were in gradation which is evident in plate 18. In painting the attire, the white collar and sleeve were painted with shades and tints of titanium white in short brush strokes. The oil paint was diluted with more linseed oil to an almost liquid consistency so that it would be possible to achieve the textural design seen in the sleeve of the attire in plate 19. This is because the paint was supposed to be applied thickly on to the canvas with a smaller round sable brush. While painting the ornamentals in the clothes, the same style and technique used in painting the sleeve was adopted to achieve the details easily in plate 20.

Lastly, tints and shades of red, yellow and ultramarine blue were applied with a bigger bristle brush which is the final step in painting my version of the “Laughing Cavalier”. Plate 21 has been provided above to represent this step.

PLATE 22(Step1)



PLATE 23 (Step 2)



PLATE 24 (Step 3)



PLATE 25 (Step4)



PLATE 26(Step 5)



The images labelled plates 22 and 23 are the first two steps used in painting my version of Doge Leonardo Leredan's portrait. The first step was to make a pencil sketch of myself in his garment. I went on to paint the wooden panel in front of the figure using burnt sienna and a mixture of azo red deep and titanium white. My second step was to paint the background with tints of ultramarine and cerulean blue, making sure the background colour was subdued in other not to conflict with the figure as shown in plate 24. Furthermore the next step was to bring out the ornamental designs in the head gear with a small round brush. Also the stick held on the bosom of the figure was painted while the face of the figure received attention. This is shown in plate 25. The final step was to paint the attire of the personality in the picture plane. A small brush was used in other to achieve the intricate detailed ornamental designs seen in the garment. The colour used includes burnt sienna; purple, yellow, titanium white and deep red. Plate 26 is a photographic representation of the explanation of the final step.

PLATE 27(Step 1)



PLATE 28(Step 2)



PLATE 29(Step 3)



PLATE 30(Step 4)



Plate 27 represents the first step used in painting the artist version of Van Gogh 's "Self portrait in a bandaged ear". A pencil sketch of the researcher's image was made wearing the costume of the personality in the original painting while the objects like the picture and easel in the background were painted using a mixture of blue, yellow, red and titanium white. At the same time the cap and winter coat were also painted. The size of the canvas was such that a small flat bristle brush was used in order to make the work easier. Plate 28 best explains this step. The next step was to paint the bandage around the ear before proceeding to the face of the artist, starting from the darker tones. The colours used were titanium white, azo yellow deep, azo red deep, ultramarine blue, burnt sienna and cerulean blue. This is shown in plate 29. Plate 30 represents the final or last step where finishing touches were added to the face using a small sable brush.

(PHASE 3)

PLATE 31(Step 1)



PLATES 32 (Step2)



PLATE 33(Step 3)



PLATE 34(Plate 4)



PLATE 35(Step 5)



PLATE 36(Step 6)



Initially, painting my version of the “Screaming Pope” was somehow confusing for me having studied the original image of this famous painting by Francis Bacon. This is because I wondered how the image was going to be painted amidst the numerous vertical lines in the picture; also colours at my disposal were red, yellow, blue white and black. The first step taken was to make a sketch of my own image in a sitting position wearing the costume of the “Screaming Pope” on a canvas with acrylic paint. A pictorial example has been provided above in plate 31. Enamel oil paint was then diluted with turpentine and later applied on to areas on the canvas representing the darkest vertical lines which also forms part of the background as seen in plate 32. The turpentine was added to the paint to speed up the drying process.

The next step was to paint the middle and light tones with broken vertical lines with a mixture of red, blue, yellow and white where some of the lines at the bottom part of the painting seem to diverge, at the same time the yellow seat on which the figure is seated was painted in plate 33. Furthermore, the attire of the figure was painted using broken lines of different tonal values. The dark lines around the clothes were the first to receive attention at this stage of the experiment. Browns seen in the attire serve as part of the background which also appear as middle and dark tones in the clothes in plate 34. The next step after painting the clothes was a very crucial stage in the experiment because it determines the outcome of the artist imitation of Francis Bacon’s painting which inspired him in this experiment. Though Bacon did not emphasis on the resemblance of the Pope by not showing the facial feature, I decided to show my facial features in this picture so that people will recognize my face in the painting. A flat sable and round brush were used in treating the face of the artist, at the same time turpentine was added to the enamel paint to make blending a little easy with the sable brush in plate 35 which also represents step 5 in this painting. Having painted the clothes, the next action taken was to paint the hands of the figure which were also painted using the same colour scheme on the face. Lastly, I used a thin layer of paint to indicate lines on the face of the figure in the picture. This was to ensure that some of the lines in the face of the original figure is seen in my version as shown in plate 36.

PLATE 37(Step1)



PLATE 38 (Step2)



PLATE 39(Step 3)



PLATE 40(Step4)



PLATE 41(Step 5)



PLATE 42 (STEP6)



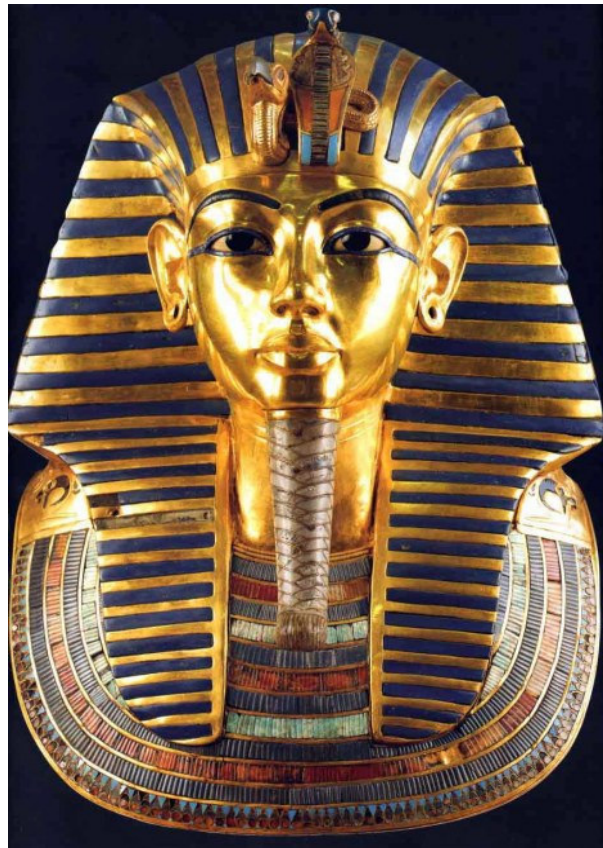
The first step in painting my version of Napoleon was to make a sketch of myself in Napoleon's royal regalia using acrylic paint where few mistakes were made and corrected. This explanation is represented in plate 37. I used industrial enamel oil in painting this picture by diluting the colours with small amounts of turpentine to speed up the drying process and to make blending easy. The background in the picture was painted in dark colours as seen in plate 38. Colours used includes red, black, blue and white. My next step was to paint the throne on which Napoleon was sitting with mixtures of blue, red, black, yellow and white followed by the robe and gloves worn by the personality in the painting after which a dark colour was used to indicate the hair and eyes in plate 39. The face of the artist was painted with the colour scheme used in the new version of Gainsborough's

“blue boy” as seen in plate 40. I further painted the designs in the cloth with a small round sable brush from the top part of the cloth which is a fur coat before painting the crown and jewellery around his neck in plate 41. The staffs of authority seen in the arms of the personality were the last objects to be painted. Plate 42 backs the explanation above.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

This Chapter involves analysis or interpretations and description of the easel paintings produced by the artist/researcher. Photographs of the original paintings have been arranged with the researcher’s version such that comparison will be easier. The details of each painting have been provided on the same page with the images.

FIGURE 11



Title: Death Mask of Tutankhamen
Medium: Gold, coloured glass and semiprecious stones.
Size: 54cm high.

PLATE 6



Artist/Researcher

Medium; Oil paint

Size; 84 cm x 66 cm (33inches x 26 inches)

PLATE 6

The Golden Death Mask of Tutankhamen is well-known internationally. I hereby superimpose myself into this image in a painting format despite the fact that Tutankhamen's image is a three-dimensional one. I try to draw the dichotomy between self and invoking self into another image. In other words, despite the fact that every individual human being is a personality in itself, it is also possible to "insinuate" or project or play-act oneself into another personality for various reasons and purposes. One can do so for no other reason than to represent a historical figure in a film or play. And we should not forget that one impersonate someone for the sheer thrill of being in somebody's shoes just "for the hell of it".

To "transcribe" a sculptural image into a two-dimensional format, as well as infuse the artist own face to represent a convincing representation of a pharaoh is not easy. The psychological barrier and physiological impediments in achieving a convincing enigma of a secondary imagery is almost insurmountable. I have however done my best by imploring all my technical painterly skills in achieving this dichotomy. Although the intention may be akin to an ego trip, the end result is worth contemplating in regard to surreal, aesthetic purpose. Lastly it must be noted that Egyptians are Africans and an African of modern times to ingratiate himself with an ancient counterpart in art should be understandable.

FIGURE12



A Sculpture piece from the Nok culture
Medium: Terra-cotta
Size: Life Size

PLATE 59



Artist/Researcher
Medium; Oil paint
Size; 66cm x 61cm (26inches x 24inches)

The Nok is one of the most recognized ancient societies in the Sub-Saharan region when sculpture is mentioned. The Nok culture is believed to have produced numerous art works which includes human heads, elephants, rams and hippopotamus. One of their most recognized art works is the human head in terra-cotta. I hereby superimpose my own likeness into this image which is three-dimensional into a two-dimensional form. Furthermore, it has been observed that the Nok culture produced their terra-cotta heads to articulate beauty. From the picture the sculpture head appears in an abstract form. However, the shape of the Nok head and representation of the features thus, the hair style, eye brows and eyes gives this sculpture work a catchy look. I question the gender of the sculpture head because the hair style looks like that of a female.

Transcribing myself into this image wasn't easy, since I was experimenting with representing features of

three-dimensional imagery into one picture plane. From my version of the Nok sculpture head, I have used brush strokes technique which adds to the aesthetic qualities of the picture whereby the background colour creates contrast helping the image to stand out. Apart from the fact that I have transformed a three-dimensional image into a two-dimensional form, the main difference in the two pictures is the facial feature of the two images of which mine is more representational whilst the original Nok is more abstracted.

FIGURE 13



Source: <http://wysinger.homestead.com/benin.html>

Title: Benin Sculpture Head

Medium: Bronze

Size: Life Size

PLATE 61



Artist/Researcher

Medium; Oil paint

Size; 66cmx 60cm (26inches x 24inches)

PLATE 61

The Bronze head of Benin is well known internationally when world history of art or sculpture is mentioned. I have superimposed myself into this sculptural image in a painting format even though the Bronze head is three-dimensional. It should be known that the Bronze head was produced to honour rulers and past kings of Benin culture. Honouring chiefs and distinguished people has been part of our society from the ancient times to our present day of life. Throughout the centuries people have been honoured for their immense contribution to society by offering gift and bestowing titles, just to mention a few. Sculpture pieces are also erected to honour individuals such as heroes in our society. In Ghana statues of great people like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and Otumfuo Opoku Ware II have been erected as a way of honouring and remembering their contributions towards society. Bust of past Vice Chancellors have been erected behind the Great Hall of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. I have transcribed this three-dimensional image into a two-dimensional format with my own face because I dream that my contributions to society as an artist will one day be greatly rewarded with a Bronze head just as the Benin culture did for their rulers and past kings. I also admire the features of the Benin sculpture head.

Furthermore, from the two images it is obvious that combining features of the artist to features of the Benin Bronze head makes it difficult to achieve the resemblance of the artist. With modern artist oil paint having a heavy consistency, it was possible to create a texture of visible brush strokes in the artist version of the Benin head. Also the Benin head in the original picture looks darker and metallic with a smooth finish except that there are incisions made on the cheeks and neck of the figure. The artist's version looks bluish with brush strokes creating interesting texture in the painting. Lastly, a warm but subdued background colour has been used so that the figure will stand out.

FIGURE 14



Ife Sculpture
Medium: Terra-cotta
Size: Life Size

PLATE 11



Artist/Researcher
Medium; Oil paint
Size; 64cm x 58 cm (25inches x 23 inches)

FINDINGS AND RESULTS.

The outcome of my experiment or exploration is more of an enigmatic nature since juxtaposing my image on recognizable personalities in African and European art history seems illogical. It is not easy to explain most of the things we do, just as some dreams are difficult to interpret, leaving us with a puzzled mind. Works produced by artists in the surreal realm are results of many influences including economic, physiological and social issues which makes these artists do what they do. Therefore the mystery behind an artist's work cannot be straight jacketed in boundaries. Every artist has a different personality trait. One can decide to copy the style of another artist yet it will never be the same as the originator of the style. The same will I be different from the personality in who's costume I appear. I have projected myself in various historical modes by juxtaposing my image on famous personalities in different styles of painting which have been categorized under three phases. (a) Phase one –transposing my features onto an original historical character or image.

(b) Phase two-imposing my own innate style or technique onto the original image.

(c) Phase three-imitating the style of the original painting which inspired my prototype.

Having gone through this exercises the researcher has realized that styles used in phase two and phase three can be found in phase one. In other words phase one is made up of all the styles used in this experiment. Paintings of sculpture pieces produced by African societies like Egypt, Nok, Ife and Benin culture were categorized under phase one where they were painted using the brush stroke technique. The same brush stroke technique is used for paintings under phase two. My version of Dali and Picasso's self-portrait are painted copying the style used by the artist in the original paintings except that some features of the researcher were added to features of the personality in the original image. A similar approach was used in painting the researcher's version of images categorized under phase three. An example is my version of "Napoleon Enthroned", where I copied the style of the original painting which inspired my prototype.

However the purpose of this project is to create an imagery that will be puzzling to the viewer's eye by painting my image in the costumes of these famous characters to show my admiration for their achievements, features and in some cases their personality. Aesthetically I have achieved results which perhaps will not only be appreciated by the viewer but can also arouse the curiosity of the viewer. Since these art works are famous in the annals of world history, one may wonder for instance what business an image of an African black man is doing in the costumes of personalities in these famous paintings. Visitors in the studio can usually react after seeing the researcher in the costume of Gainsborough's painting, "the Blue boy". It is unusual to see an African wearing such costumes.

Lastly, the eighteen paintings produced by the artist projects the researcher in different character traits as that of an African ancestor, an emperor, a kings, famous artist, an Italian Renaissance magistrate just to mention a few.

CONCLUSION

It is sometimes necessary for artists to explore more avenues that can add mystery or puzzle to their output so as to excite the imagination of the viewer and to also capture that aspect in a unique way just like how dreams are hard to interpret yet still arouse our curiosity. Therefore many dreams are said to be enigmatic considering the fact that the majority of them cannot be interpreted. Perhaps when pictures are self-explanatory there is no need for anyone to be inquisitive and even read deep meaning into the works. That is why enigmatic works can be considered self-explanatory. On the other hand, it is easy for rational thinking people with scientific and rigid turn of mind to condemn such works as nonsensical. Such people simply have limited imagination. We should be aware that there are a lot of irrationality in this world, even man's inhumanity to his fellow men shows it. It is therefore vital that such enigmatic works be shown so that observers will consider some of the irrationalities of our existence in a logical though inexplicable manner.

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