

A PLASTIC REPRESENTATION OF CHILD ABUSE IN MAIDUGURI AND ENVIRONS IN PAINTING

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Introduction

This project is an attempt to draw the deepest interest and intention of people through paintings to the conditions of the Nigerian child, who is often deprived of his or her rights and obligations within our communities. It is in the best interest of the world today that through the prompting of the United Nations, UNICEF and other non- governmental organizations including governments and nations to endeavour to protect and provide for the immediate needs of the abused child. Some countries see children as domestic spare parts of life, a media through which the able-bodied earn a comfortable life. The child needs all the affection, love and colorfully bright emotions from people to encourage and facilitate a natural mind, free from bad memories that could inflict psychological pain, influence or intimidate the child in future. The child needs special care and treatment without discrimination and protection that would prepare him/her to live independently within the community.

This research work is aimed at producing a painting to depict the emotional and difficult state of children within Maiduguri and its surroundings. Painting as a means of communication is enhanced and effectively transmitted to the emotions through colours and shapes. Its language speaks to our different feelings and touches our deepest emotions. In the art of oil painting on canvas using lines, shapes motifs and attractive elements the sores of child abuse are captured, modified and produced as art works that best relate the child's condition, rights and attraction to his people. A child is recognized by UNICEF standard as any human below the age of eighteen (18 years). Approximately 340 million children under the age of eighteen (18 years) live in sub-Saharan Africa. What is happening to the child and his everyday life? The following preamble recalls the basic principles and policies of nations and organizations worldwide concerning the child.

UNICEF observe that in many developing countries children suffer depurations. Such a child could meet with accidents or get infected with deadly diseases considering the type of clumps around his environment. An innocent kola-nut seller you meet daily along the streets of Maiduguri is a young girl that knows nothing about sex and its several effects, but ends up sexually harassed, abused and humiliated over a token amount as profit. These children are at risk because they are deprived of education, due to the inability or unwillingness of their parents to sponsor their education. Children that do attend schools are also involved in domestic or other kinds of labour such as animal herding, farm work, hawking, babysitting, shoe mending and cart pushing.

Such are practices found within Maiduguri Metropolis and can be regarded as a microcosm of the macrocosm which is Nigeria. Instead of a playground children play on major streets around rubbish dumps and other risky areas found within their different domains.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research project are as follows: -

- i. To create a large painting based on the different themes of child abuse, child rights and their environment. The painting is supposed to educate organizations, government and the general populace on the need to have affection towards children.
- ii. To create a painting depicting actions concerning the child emanating from social

norms and values that suits his or her own interest.

- iii. To arouse attention that appeals to people emotionally. The more educated they are towards child abuse the more appreciative they would be in providing a standard living environment for them.
- iv. To also show through painting some of the difficulties experienced by the child during his/her development.

Relevance of the Study

This research project would educate communities, the government and non- governmental organizations, agencies and all human endeavour related organizations about the most desperate needs of the Nigerian child who needs love from all and by all.

Statement of the Problem

The effort of government and non-governmental organizations to alleviate the suffering of children within the Maiduguri Metropolis and Nigeria in general is one of the central issues of this project. The state of children in Maiduguri is frightful and worsening by the day. Despite all the efforts made to enhance the educational status and the health sector, the issues of child abuse, child rights violations and recently child trafficking has grown in focus. Many children suffer immensely in the society and only a few have been uplifted from their poor living conditions. Numerous programmes have been set up by government to help those who need support these turn out to be difficult tasks for the relevant organizations to accomplish. Since the task as a developed Nigeria is every Nigerian's duty we have to bear in mind that our children are the future leaders of Nigeria. So everybody is supposedly involved in this to help the child forge a better tomorrow. National plans of action for children with a set of specific, time bound and measurable targets and goals, as agreed to at the U.K. special session on children, it is expected to go a long way towards meeting the agenda of "A world fit for children" (The State of the World Children 2005: 97,98).

Scope and Limitation

This study is limited to the microcosm Maiduguri and its surroundings. Here you can find people from the neighboring states, bordering countries of Niger, Chad, Cameroon and people from other parts of the country. Child abuse is evident on the streets, motor parks, city areas, public institutions etc. The level at which these children are exposed and abused by the environment is worrisome. A gargantuan painting depicting child abuse is created with colours and images that would arouse emotions towards child affection and rights.

Review of Literature and Related Art

Revisiting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the impact of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the status of children has been as profound as its consolidation of the rights of children. Childhood also means the time between birth and the attainment of adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of the child's life, to the quality of those years. It's the most widely endorsed Human Rights Treaty in history, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 in effect represents a global consensus on the terms of childhood. Although there is no absolute agreement on the interpretation of each and every provision of the convention, there is substantial common ground on what the standards of childhood should be (Childhood under threat. 2005, p 1).

The government should as a priority adopt socially responsible policies keeping children specifically in mind to be able to fully promote and protect Human Rights and achieve sustainable development. The terms of childhood; child's rights;

According to the convention on the rights of the child, every child has the right to:

Non-discrimination, Actions taken in their best interest, Survival and development, Right to identity, Family relation and parental guidance, Protection from illicit transfer and illegal adoption, Freedom of expression, thought and peaceful assembly, State protection of privacy, home family and correspondence, Access to appropriate information, Protection from abuse and neglect, Special care if disabled, Health and access to health care services, Benefit from social security, Decent standards of living, Education, Rest and leisure, play and recreation, culture and arts, Protection from child labour, trafficking, sexual and other forms of exploitation and drugs abuse, Protection from torture and deprivation of liberty, Dignity and worth, even if the child has infringed the law, Rights refer to article 1 to 40 of the Convention on the Rights of The Child (The State of World Children. 2005, p4).

Review of Related Art



Figure 1: Gani Odutokun, **The Orphans**, 1977

Gani Odutokun's, the Orphans 1977, is an important representation of child difficulties during the late 1970's. it was exerted with chalk pastel. The painting depicts three children probably from the same family unit who might have lost their parents and were left on their own to strive very hard to survive. The two boys and a little girl are painted in blue lines, their facial expressions very pathetic. The background characteristic of northern Nigeria, showing mud houses of the typical Hausa-Fulani's. Gani successfully portrays the sympathetic condition of these orphans. Hunger strongly glares on their faces, the boy in the middle yawns for food as his elder brother helplessly carries an empty bowl, while their sister, the youngest of the three looks up at her brothers disappointed and helpless after discovering the empty container. From the blanket or piece of cloth around her, one can almost feel the freezing dryness of Harmattan season in West Africa between November and mid-March in the atmosphere. The composition of the subject matter in this painting is balanced. Another painting that clearly shows a child depressed and probably denied of at least one of the rights of a child is by Lami Bature (1994), Nigerian artist. It is a personification of hard

work and courage. Lami Bature likes to relate colours to the moods of her subjects. Her preferred area is portraiture. Her desire to visit models at home for study in their natural settings. The result is astonishing behind the face of shyness for instance, a viewer may detect the capacity of mischief in some of the younger models.



Figure 2: Lami Bature, **Maggi**, 76 X 54cm, 1994

Lami, influenced herself by Gani, -portrays on this 76 x 54cm canvas surface a young girl wearing a yellow scarf painted in blue and green hues. One can see the innocence of the naturalistic figure represented, showing a feeling that seems to be of some one in deep thought. The little girl's portrait is limited only to her face and her right hand as if supporting the mass of the head. A position that is common with thinking or meditating for salvation from somewhere. Somebody looking at this painting will not only appreciate work of art but also feel the mood of the subject matter enhanced by selected colours. This painting clearly depicts emotions from a deprived child.

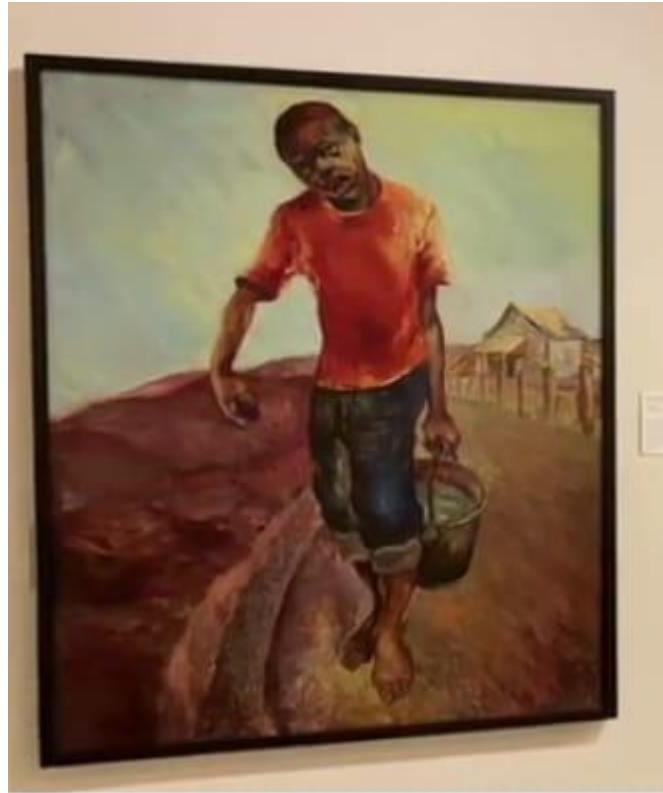


Figure 3: Samella Sanders Lewis, **Water boy**, 1944

Samella Sanders Lewis, an Afro-American female painter has a style, which ranges from a portraiture to stylized landscape with works in vast variety of media. Her inspiration of the Afro- American culture and strong ability to convey emotions with colour is consistent throughout her paintings. In this painting of the water boy, a young boy is depicted carrying a heavy pail of water. In this setting he is weary and down cast. Lewis described this as a personal piece "a self -portrait in terms of feelings" While growing up, she visited her relatives each summer in the Bayou region of Louisiana. This painting was based upon her experiences going to the country doing tasks. Her relatives carried water for their use and when visiting, she was assigned that hated chore. The house 'in the background is imaginative, but drawn from her recollection of her relative 's home. Her teacher encouraged her to put pure colours next to pure colours, so that colours became more symbolic and created an intensity of feeling (Powell and Reynolds, 1967).

Methodology

This study involves the Following:

- a) Data collection
- b) Pencil sketches
- c) Preliminary colour studies
- d) Materials
- e) Conceptualization
- f) Colour choice
- g) Artistic forms

Data Collection

Informal interviews of people around motor park areas, listening to conversations, sketching, studying and making observations were carried out by the artist. Photographs of children under risk, hardship and related labour activities were taken for study. Television documentaries and

daily news (on NTA and BRTV stations) and other visuals constituted vital resource for proper analysis, understanding situations, conditions of abuse centered around children within artist's vicinity, culture, tradition and geographic location Maiduguri and Nigeria as a nationality.

Pencil Studies

For proper visual representation of the subject matter of this research sketches were made to achieve the principles of organization. The artist employed the basic elements of design for a clear presentation and unity of figures and structural composition in the final work. Series of sketches also provided a significant amount of compositions from which the last two sketches were chosen to determine the final work.

Preliminary Colour Studies

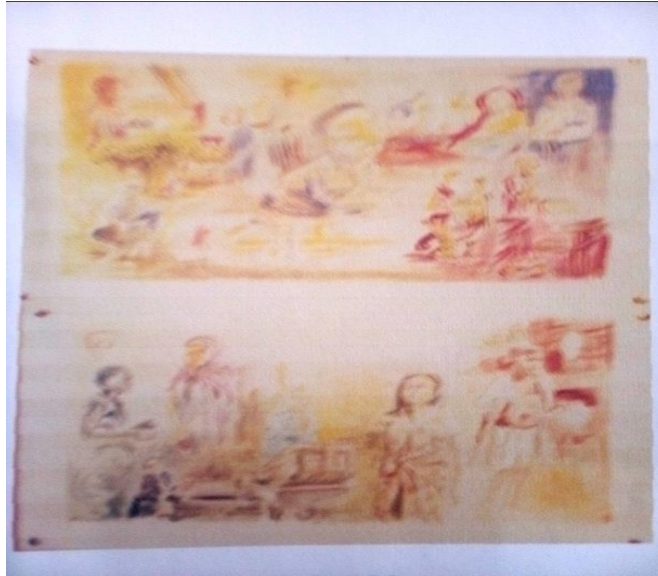


Plate 1: Preliminary Colour study

To create illusions of three dimensions on two-dimensional surface the artist organises colours according to their abilities to express and create compositional depth. As found upon the surface of canvases, colour expresses more than any other element mood or feeling even when it is not descriptive of the objects represented.

Materials

The materials involved in this research include locally sourced and imported readymade materials. Wood for stretcher is provided and prepared for suitable execution of the final project. Painting Brushes, Palette, Palette knife etc. are the conventional tools used. Priming of canvas was done by the artist with wood glue.

This research work is studio-based and necessary studio materials and equipment were in place for a successful work.

Conceptualization

The idea of the plastic use of elements to create visual illusion is partly an effort to capture emotions and conditions to educate people that appreciate and understand better through visual aesthetics. This representative artwork, the manipulative use of lines or strokes, motifs or patterns of cool and warm colours, textures etc. employed as a means to producing brilliant results

Colour Choice

Psychological application of colour for this research has shown that light and bright colours make us feel joyful and uplifted, warm colours are generally stimulating, cool colours are calming, while cool dark, somber colours are generally depressing. This artist's choice of colour is formed from the primary triads, which also produce the secondary colours needed. When all these colours are mixed together the result is gray, adding to my colour composition intensity to distinguish bright colours from dull hue of the background. The other property of colour is value; value in colours is the distinguishing factor between light and darkness of colour.

All necessary properties of colours available to artist's knowledge and experience are properly represented in this research. Colour is one very important aspect of this work.

Artist Forms

In this case naturalism and realism are both manipulated in different colour compositions. Realism is a style in art that retains the basic impression of visual actuality without going to extremes of details. It attempts to relate and interpret the universal meaning that lie beneath surface appearances (Ocvirk, Stinson, Wigg, Bone and Cayton (2004).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This research is a studio-based exploration. Pencil drawings and water colour studies were carried out sometimes utilizing photographs taken basically for the purpose of the study.

Analysis is based on depicting conditions and actual situations of some of the abused children as they carry out their day to day activities.

Pencil Studies



Plate 2: Pencil study

In the course of this research, inspiration was gotten about the behaviour of children around Maiduguri public areas i.e. the motor parks, streets, institutions etc. Quick pencil sketches were studied to present a clear picture of what is happening to the Nigerian child. There are three studies selected from the number of drawings made to form the basis of the final painting. Light and shade is emphasized to depict behavioural and climatic conditions. Strokes, curves, thin and thick lines of pencil are employed to show clearly represented situation as experienced firsthand. The pencil studies for the compositions are illustrated below.

Water colour Studies

The water colour studies chosen were those that would eventually make the final painting. Here colour has shown in clear contrast a visual sequence of analysis in regards to relating the painting

to its audience. Colour in psychological application relates us to familiar experience either remembered or for future referencing.

Emotions can be stimulated by colours in terms of effects created through light and shade, which could also be interpreted as it casts on the figures in this painting. The water colour studies are illustrated below.

Painting in progress



Plate 3: Painting in progress

4.3 Final painting



Plate 4: Final painting **Careless Child**, 121cm x 228cm, oil on canvas, 2005.

The technique chosen for the final painting is for the researcher's convenience the researcher employed the use of composition to balance figures enhance with fresh brush strokes and colour display to visualize the conditions as faced by some children. The colour scheme is aimed at attracting audience attention to the information it portrays. The subject matter of this painting is centered on the baby, whose childhood is threatened by activities around his community. Composed around this figure are scenes within Maiduguri township area. A figure is depicted of a child directing a blind beggar, the child holding a bowl for begging money, food, etc. This child to

the beggar is the most important help available. Such a relationship reflects on the little boy's future. Painted in warm hues are three young boys rushing for food at a restaurant.

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

This visual representation of under-privileged children, a case study of Maiduguri and its surroundings has depicted child rights and activities under social threat. With regards to visual experience, this research attempt to explain child rights and abusive condition of today.

Conclusion

Through a series of studies, the researcher was able to present the condition of children under threat in visual dramatic naturalistic and semi- realistic combination.

References

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