

SEMIOTICS AND ABSTRACT REALISM IN THE PAINTINGS OF JIMMY NWANNE, HARRISON IDAHOSA AND IBE ANANABA: A SAUSSURIAN STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Art has long served as a canvas for human expression, encapsulating diverse facets of our complex world. A reconnoiter of semiotics and abstract realism offers a compelling lens through which artists communicate profound messages while engaging with the abstract and the representational. In this vein, the works of Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba emerge as captivating explorations that beckon us to decipher the intricate tapestries they have woven. This study embarks on a journey to decode the semiotic layers and abstract realism inherent in the artworks of these three talented artists. However, our quest is not undertaken in isolation but rather within the framework and theories of Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics. Saussure's pioneering work in semiotics provides a structured lens through which we can analyze the intricate interplay of signs and symbols within the realm of art. Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba, each hailing from unique artistic backgrounds, have contributed significantly to the discourse surrounding semiotics and abstract realism. Their works, while distinct in style and subject matter, share a common thread of utilizing semiotic elements to convey powerful messages.

The use of semiotics as an analytical framework in visual arts has gained prominence in recent decades. Semiotics in painting involves the use of visual elements as carriers of meaning, conveying both explicit and implicit messages. The concept of semiotics or semiology is central to the study of an artwork as an embodiment of sign, a theory grounded in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914). In painting, symbols and motifs are employed to communicate social, religious, and cultural significance, allowing artists to engage in visual storytelling. The human body, plants, objects, colours, lines, alphabets and shapes can express innumerable amount of symbolic referents which are added to the many other roles they play in the world. Throughout history, painters and other visual artists have explored myriad ways of presenting symbolic narrative to their fellow humans. Ocvirk, Stinson, Wigg, Bone, Cayton, (2006) state that all art is illusionary to some extent, and that some artworks are more successful than others at drawing us out of the ordinary existence into heightened state of awareness. The quality of the subject depicted may provide information as to what degree of involvement the artist has had with it. Symbolic images can express ideas and crystallize understanding in more dramatic ways than words. Additionally, their educative power broadens the imagination and elevates the thought of an individual.

The idea of synthesizing abstract elements with realistic forms could be seen in the works of some contemporary Nigerian painters like Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa and Ibe Ananaba, who have imbibed the principles of abstract realism in their paintings. According to Ikpakroyi (2008), the development of synthesis in modern Nigerian art began with the adventures of Aina Onabolu and his contemporaries in the early 20th century, when they broke away from traditional Nigerian art forms. These artists sought to sharpen their skills and technique through formal training. Their goal was to destroy the myths by some Europeans that African artists were incapable of producing realistic art.

To fully appreciate the convergence of semiotics and abstract realism in the artworks of Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba, it is imperative to contextualize their creations within the broader historical and socio-cultural backdrop of Nigeria. The latter half of the 20th century and

the early 21st century have witnessed profound changes in Nigeria, a nation known for its rich cultural diversity, complex history, and vibrant artistic traditions. Emerging from a colonial past, Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and embarked on a journey of nation-building amidst numerous challenges. During this period, Nigerian artists began to explore new forms of artistic expression, incorporating both local and global influences. The 1960s and 1970s marked a vibrant era for Nigerian art, with artists like Ben Enwonwu who began to introduce various forms of stylization and abstraction into his works and the likes of Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko and Bruce Onobrakpeya who pioneered the "Natural Synthesis" movement, which sought to bridge traditional African art forms with contemporary practices.

As Nigeria transitioned from colonial rule to independence and navigated through periods of military rule and civilian governance, the country's artists continued to evolve their artistic expressions. This dynamic backdrop provided a fertile ground for artistic experimentation, including the fusion of abstract and realism. However, Nigeria also grappled with political instability, economic fluctuations, and social changes. These tumultuous times often found their reflection in the works of artists, who used their canvases to comment on societal issues, advocate for change, and delve into the complexities of Nigerian identity as well as stories derived from personal experiences. Against this historical tapestry, Jimmy Nwanna, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba emerged as significant voices in Nigerian contemporary art. Their works not only reflect personal experiences and socio-political concerns in Nigeria but also contribute to a global dialogue on the intersection of art, symbolism, and meaning. The use of semiotics as an analytical framework in visual arts has gained prominence in recent decades. Through this exploration, we seek to unearth the nuanced semiotic structures embedded in their creations. This study serves not only as a testament to the artists' profound talents but also as an invitation to delve into the depths of their visual narratives. The study also traverses the realms of abstract and realism, signs and symbols, and the intricate dance between artistic expression and semiotic interpretation through the lens of Saussure's structural model. The paper aims to unravel the hidden meanings within the works of these artists and gain a deeper understanding of the semiotic underpinnings imbued in their artistic visions.

Semiotics in Painting

Symbolism is associated with the theory of the work of art as sign, where semiotics or semiology functions. Initiated by Ferdinand de Saussure ((1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914). Hence, Semiotics applies to the study of art as an embodiment of signs. This then implies that the work of art is beyond its referent. Saussure, a Swiss linguist and Pierce, an American philosopher, both made equally significant contributions to the theory of semiotics. Saussure's model was hinged on two elements; he believed that a sign must have a signifier and the signified. The signifier in this context, would refer to anything that is perceived, visualized or depicted, while the signified refers to the meaning or concept implied thereof. Chandler (2020) opines that, Pierce proposes a triadic model- The Represent; the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material); An Interpretant; not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign; An Object; to which the sign refers. According to Chandler, an auxiliary categorization of the semiotic sign is the iconic, symbolic and indexical signs. The iconic refers to a sign that is interpreted by its literal representation. The indexical sign stands for the causal effect or relationship between the signifier and the signified. While the symbol implies or conveys a meaning or a concept beyond the literal representation of the sign.

In these frames, it is clear that the sign or symbol at times may not convey directly its referent. In essence, symbols are characterized by a subjective application and interpretation. Paintings provide diverse valid views regarding a symbol, where proper hermeneutic approach is adopted. Artists invest a lot of faith in the use of symbols as it is becoming increasingly imperative for art to assume a more responsive role in every sphere of modern life. In paintings, the symbols are at times vague. A symbol may possess the ability to signify more than one thing. The human mind cannot expend the plenitude of meanings that an artwork connotes. This is why the sign or symbol is said to be polysemic or polysemous.

Some objects derive their meaning when they are harmoniously associated with other forms or elements. The relationship between these objects or elements makes it easy for one to draw up a theme. For example, Colour is a very important symbolic element of abstract realism. And painters assign very significant role to its application. The colours we see when we look at things get us thinking, they evoke emotions and reflect concepts such as memory, hope, passion and other transcendent ideas. Colours do have very deep effects on the minds of humans due to cultural influences or personal experiences, but they can assume a different connotation when associated with other objects; red may be viewed by some to connote danger, yet a red fruit would symbolize concepts such as passion or pleasure by the same group. It is because the human mind is wont to symbolic interpretations of images and signs.

Saussure's Theory of the Signifier and the Signified

In the realm of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the signifier and the signified provides a fundamental understanding of how meaning is constructed through the relationship between these two components. This concept can be applied to various forms of visual communication, including painting, which has proven to be a powerful tool for advocacy and communication. A visual artwork, much like a linguistic sign, consists of two essential components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier in painting is the visual representation captured by the artist, composed of various elements such as the subject, lines, textures and colours. The signified, on the other hand, refers to the message, emotion, or concept that the painting conveys to its viewers.

Abstract Realism, with its fusion of abstract elements and the representational, serves as a vivid illustration of Saussure's theory of the arbitrariness of signs in action. Just as Saussure's theory encourages a critical exploration of the relationship between language and reality, painting as a form of visual language, through the lens of semiotic interpretation reconstructs realities that have the power to convey narratives and impact the mind. Nigerians are more likely to be viewers than readers; this therefore, makes our society an increasingly visually oriented society. Aboderin (2017) avers that paintings portray various symbolic images with diverse meanings for the appreciation of a perceiving audience. According to Aboderin, how effective these symbolic images in painting are able to communicate depends on how well the technical and semantic challenges are resolved by the artist. The obvious representations (the realistic part) of an abstract realistic work would often make it easy for the viewer to identify and interpret shared meanings. Ross, (2015) states that "the vocabulary of fine arts is realistic images which we see everywhere throughout our lives, and the grammar are the rules and skills needed to successfully and believably render the images."

According to Duniya (2019), Nigerian artists have against the odds continuously keyed into opportunities provided by society to advance their relevance, and fulfill practical roles in contemporary society. By carefully selecting signifiers, painters can direct viewers' attention to specific issues, prompting them to engage with the underlying signified message. The power of the signifier lies in its ability to encapsulate a particular moment, emotion, or scene. This is where abstract realistic paintings intersect with Saussure's theory. The choice of signifiers, such as subjects, objects, and symbols within a work, can greatly influence the signified message. For instance, an image of a child dressed in white can symbolize innocence, while an image of tree felling can evoke concern about environmental degradation. The interplay between signifiers and the signified in painting allows for nuanced storytelling. Different signifiers can be used to convey various aspects of the same signified message, catering to diverse views and perspectives.

Abstract Realism

The celebrated arts and media has become one of fastest growing industries in Nigeria, the need for craft and creativity is so crucial if the nation must favorably compete in the global arena. The study of how visual elements are rendered and organized so that they can pull the viewer to contemplate on their deeper significance is a worth-while venture. According to McGraw (2013), the proponents

of abstract realism teach a strong technical foundation which leads to highly rendered paintings, simultaneously, adopting a philosophy of synthesis of abstract beauty which is used to lead the viewer's eye through the painting and become a visual hint that subtly captivates the observer. Abstract realists are primarily motivated to create visual impact and promote an idea by employing the symbolic aspects of light, colour, lines and spaces to augment realistic representations of their subject. Hence, the subject matter becomes a vehicle and not the reason for painting. The goal of the abstract realist was to evoke emotions and inspire other visual vocabularies. Wanless (2007) states that all drawings and paintings involve the process of abstraction to a greater or lesser degree as a result of the inner distillation process that is at work in everyone, whether he or she is aware of it or not. Mize (2019) defines abstract as taking from or to separate from something else, and it can also mean to summarize or minimalize. Mize states that in truth we abstract each time we capture an image, whether or not we intend to leave something out or simply change or exaggerate its characteristics.

Contemporary Nigerian artists who have a knack for accurate representation of their subject matter are challenged not to only concern themselves with the aesthetic predilection that their works provide, but use them as tools for communicating deeper meanings. Therefore, Abstract Realism as an art style lends itself as a constructive tool for new assumptions. The 20th century was packed with a myriad of concepts within the arts due to the search for new artistic vocabulary by various artists. According to Mize, abstraction was the guiding force in most art schools. Consequently, good drawing skills and observational techniques were seldom taught, and the focus was rather on how to extract design and patterns within images, thereby creating artworks without any recognizable object.

It is difficult to classify Abstract Realism as an art movement, because it permeates various art movements. Various methods and approaches are employed in the creation of abstract realistic artworks, offering valuable insights to identify Abstract Realism. York (2020) opines that there exists a threefold approach to producing and appreciating Abstract Realistic paintings. Firstly, a subject is figuratively depicted, whether through photography or personal experience. Secondly, non-figurative design elements are infused into the composition. Thirdly, a remarkable indescribable experience emerges from the harmonious interplay between these figurative and non-figurative elements. By synthesizing abstraction and realism in painting, artists gain complete freedom and endless creative possibilities. In abstract realism, the presence of obvious representations. According to York, the realism part acts as a guiding anchor for viewers, even when the abstract part may be avant-garde or experimental. Gradually, the abstract aspects of the artwork work their captivating magic on the engaged viewer.

As emotive tools, abstract realistic artworks have the potential to evoke empathy, compassion, and a sense of urgency in addressing human concerns. The interplay of abstraction and realism allows artists to convey both the tangible realities and the intangible emotions associated with contemporary social dilemmas. Semiotics and Abstract Realism converge to create a powerful platform for artists to express and communicate profound human concerns through art. Hence, these artworks invite viewers to engage on an emotional and intellectual level, fostering a deeper connection with the issues at hand. By harnessing the evocative potential of abstract realism, artists contribute to shaping a more empathetic and conscious society, initiating conversations, and inspiring positive responses.

Jimmy Nwanne

Born in Kaduna, Nigeria, in the year 1989, Jimmy Nwanne embarked on his artistic journey by studying Fine Arts at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, Nigeria, with a specialization in painting. Presently, he resides and creates art in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Nwanne's artistic endeavors have taken him beyond borders, showcasing his works in exhibitions held in Denmark, Germany, and his home country, Nigeria. Nwanne's art, whether in the form of portraiture or

composition, delves into the intricate relationship between life, identity, and migration. He explores the concept of freedom in crafting compositions and portraits by rearranging the natural placement of elements to convey profound ideas and meanings. His work seamlessly blends various subjects and objects, employing them as symbolic motifs to represent concepts, invoking associations with different facets of life. The interplay between these elements often suggests a sense of overlap or a metaphorical "cut and paste." The essence of Nwanne's art lies in how all these diverse elements harmoniously come together to establish a dialogue and evoke emotions within the viewer. His work serves as a captivating exploration of abstract elements and realistic rendering of subjects to portray various aspects of life, and they are skillfully composed to resonate with those who encounter it.

In Nwanne's abstract realistic painting titled "Bond," the signifier is the visual representation of a mother holding her child, while the signified is the concept of maternal love and support. The unraveling wrapper symbolizes the impermanence of material aid, contrasting with the enduring nature of a mother's bond. This artwork exemplifies Saussure's structural semiotics by juxtaposing abstract elements like color patches, collage, and texture with the realistic depiction of the mother and child (signifier) to reflect or convey the idea that beyond material support, the true essence lies in the emotional and physical connection between parent and child (signified).

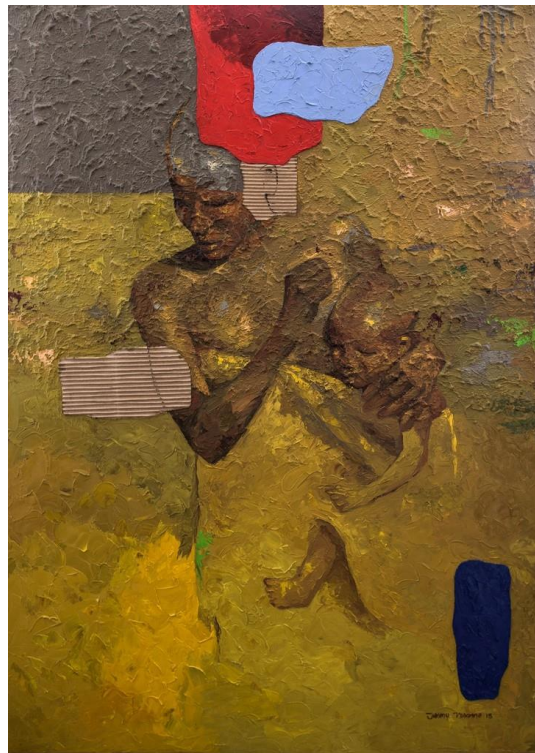


Plate 1. Jimmy Nwanne, Bond, 140 x 100cm, mixed media on canvas, 2015
www.mutualart.com



Plate 2. Jimmy Nwanne, *Trending*, Mixed Media on Canvas, 140cm x 100cm, 2016
Arthouse modern and contemporary art catalogue.

In the captivating painting titled "Trending" by Jimmy Nwanne, the artist's profound exploration of abstract realism comes to life. In this artwork, Nwanne masterfully creates a signifier by amalgamating color, texture and collage that amplifies the painting's impact. The focal point of the composition is a realistic portrayal of an unclad female figure, seemingly engrossed in capturing a "selfie" with a mobile phone. To convey this poignant symbolism, Nwanne ingeniously introduces an overlay of ultramarine blue at the top part of the painting, imbuing the artwork with an enigmatic aura. The evocative choice of color accentuates the subject's act of self-capturing, symbolizing a quest for self-identity and validation amidst a rapidly changing world. This portrayal signifies an uncanny trend prevalent among young females today, perceived as a "cool thing" in contemporary culture. In "Trending," Nwanne skillfully amalgamates abstract and realistic elements within a structural semiotics framework. The artwork serves as a reflective exploration of contemporary society's complexities, encouraging viewers to question and introspect in the face of modern existence's ever-shifting dynamics.

Harrison Idahosa

Harrison Idahosa is a Nigerian born artist. He studied painting at the University of Maiduguri and graduated with a first class degree. In 2001 he exhibited his paintings and photographs at the National Conference for HIV/AIDS and also participated in the "Nigeria at 50" cultural and historical exhibition in 2010, and many other art exhibitions. The artist has also earned a number of portrait commissions from notable personalities and some government agencies such as the Federal Judicial Service Commission, National Judicial Commission and The Supreme Court of Nigeria. In 2013, he won the grand prize of the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library National Arts Competition and in 2021, he was awarded a certificate for artistic achievements by the Luxembourg Museum of Art. The artist began to delve into thematic studies in order to develop richer and deeper works that could address key societal issues. Idahosa is devoted to the use of symbolic referents derived from personal experiences, and believes it is imperative for art to assume a more responsive role in every sphere

of modern life. He is an ardent advocate for the pursuit of technical mastery and for developing an authentic voice that could inspire younger artists as well as presenting others with the opportunity of having a fresh view point, deepening their experience of the visual world in order to enhance their enjoyment of art. Visual art is one way through which the artist's voice is heard and the heart beat felt. Currently, he lectures at the Department of Fine Arts, University of Maiduguri. Harrison is also a multimedia artist and a musician.



Plate 3. Harrison Idahosa, *Tatafo*, Mixed media, 30 x 30cm, 2019.
Artists collection.



Plate 4. Harrison Idahosa, *You be Queen* 2019
Artists collection.

In "You Be Queen," Harrison Idahosa employs structural semiotics to convey a powerful message about the importance of dignifying and empowering Nigerian girl children while drawing attention to the challenges they face and the potential for transformation and greatness within them. The

primary signifier in the painting is the visual representation of a girl child putting on the Nigerian flag. The red abstracted background serves as another signifier, representing the pain and trauma inflicted on many girls who have suffered abuse and indignity. This background symbolizes the harsh realities faced by some girls. The crown drawn on a piece of wood above the girl's head acts as a powerful signifier. It serves as a metaphor for triumph and transformation. The axiom, "every mess could be turned into a message and every pain transformed into power," is represented by the idea that rough wood can be transformed into valuable furniture, tools, or art pieces. The crown also symbolizes the inherent royalty and greatness within every girl child, regardless of her background. The painting is inspired by real-life events, including the plight of Leah Sharibu and the other Chibok girls, as well as the broader issue of abducted and molested children in Nigerian. The style of the artwork involves a subtle engagement of abstraction in the background and the prominent representation of the crown. This stylistic choice adds depth to the semiotic elements within the painting, emphasizing the contrast between the harsh background and the transformative potential symbolized by the crown.

"Tatafo" presents a rich tapestry of abstract realism, delving into various layers of meaning and symbolism. The primary signifier in the painting is the realistic representation of a tin-can telephone, evoking memories of childhood play and communication. This visual element signifies both the innocence of youth and the simplicity of communication. Intertwined with this realistic portrayal are abstract motifs inspired by the artist's childhood game marks (chinkus) and child-like graffiti. These abstract elements serve as additional signifiers, representing the creative and imaginative aspects of childhood. The word "Tatafo" itself acts as a signifier, connoting various meanings such as a telephone, excessive talk, and gossip. This word adds layers of meaning to the artwork, encompassing both childhood playfulness and the complexities of communication. The painting becomes a representation of interactions among children, where storytelling often involves exaggerations to make tales more captivating. The grid lines (chinkus) in the painting signify the interplay of relationships and communal dynamics.

In a second context, the artwork opens the door to an examination of communication within the larger context of Nigeria's insurgency crises. The tin-can telephones at the center of the canvas represent the holders of information and key players in crisis management, who may disseminate false figures or hoard crucial details. The grid symbolizes the diverse aspects, states, and sentiments of the nation, reflecting the multifaceted nature of communication in times of turmoil. Through "Tatafo," Idahosa navigates the realms of structural semiotics and Abstract Realism, unveiling a mesmerizing interplay of emotions and societal complexities. The painting resonates on multiple levels, inviting viewers to reflect on their own childhood memories, the importance of transparent communication, and the ever-changing fabric of societal interactions. In this captivating fusion of artistic styles, "Tatafo" stands as a timeless testament to the power of artistic expression in capturing the essence of symbolism and meaning.

Ibe Ananaba

Born in Belgium and raised in Aba, Nigeria, Ibe Ananaba discovered his passion for art at an early age, influenced by his talented older brother, also an artist. He pursued his love for the art by earning a Distinction in Painting while studying Fine and Applied Arts at the Institute of Management and Technology in Enugu, Nigeria, graduating in 1999. For fifteen years, Ananaba worked as an Art Director in the advertising industry before dedicating himself to full-time studio practice. Known for his eagerness to push creative boundaries, he employs an interdisciplinary approach to his art, encompassing roles as a painter, fashion illustrator, art director, calligraphist, designer, and muralist. Ananaba's artistic journey has taken him to various international destinations, where he has participated in both group exhibitions and solo shows in countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, the United States, the UK, Israel, and Canada. In 2019, he achieved First Prize in the Art Masters Contest at Art Vancouver. His artistry extends beyond the canvas, as he shares his expertise through

workshops and seminars on topics like 'Harnessing Your Artistic Potential.' Additionally, Ananaba is actively involved as the Chief Art Consultant and Coordinator of studio programs for the Girl Child Art Foundation, a non-governmental organization dedicated to using art for advocacy among adolescent girls. One notable project by Ananaba is "Follow the Journey," a captivating mural project at the Seven-Up Bottling Company headquarters in Lagos, illustrating the company's historical timeline in Nigeria from its inception in 1960 to the present day. In 2016, he led the African Child Advocacy Wall Mural Campaign in collaboration with the Canadian High Commission in Abuja, Nigeria. Ananaba's remarkable work has gained recognition in international publications, including "Fashion: A Second Language" (Shoko Press, London, 2020), "Watercolor Artists Magazine" (2019), "Masters of Watercolors" (Planeta Muzyki Publishers, Finland, 2018), "The Villager" (Tracey McDonald Publishers, South Africa, 2018), "Fashion Illustration Africa" (Shoko Press, London, 2016), and "Artists of Nigeria" (5 Continents Edition, Italy, 2012). Notably, his work is part of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries Collection. Currently based in Lagos, Ananaba continues to create and innovate within the vibrant landscape of the art world.



Plate 5. Ibe Ananaba, Give us this day our daily fuel #1, 101.6 x 127 cm, 2018.
artforum.com



**Plate 6. Ibe Ananaba, Who Goes First? #2, Oil on Canvas, 76.2 x76.2cm, 2018
Instagram @ibeananaba**

Ibe Ananaba's "Give Us Our Daily Fuel #1" is an evocative painting; a mesmerizing blend of abstract realism unfolds, showcasing the artist's exceptional talent for visual activism and societal commentary. Ananaba's enthusiasm for thought-provoking artworks takes center stage in this captivating creation. The artwork serves as a powerful visual metaphor, signifying the pressing need for good governance in Nigeria, a country blessed with abundant crude oil resources. Despite this wealth, the nation continues to suffer from the scarcity of its refined product due to poor governance and resource mismanagement. With expressive application of colors and strokes, Ananaba represents the mounting anger and frustration through splashes of intense orange, red, and purple on the human figures. These colors signify the fiery emotions of the Nigerian people in the face of fuel scarcity and highlight the urgency for change.

Throughout the composition, jerry cans feature as recurring motifs or signifiers, representing the familiar accessories required to endure fuel scarcity. These motifs serve as potent symbols of resilience and the people's tenacity in navigating challenging circumstances. Ananaba's artistic finesse seamlessly combines accurate rendering and proportions with abstract qualities of spontaneous colors and textures. By obscuring some details of reality, the artist invites viewers to actively engage with the painting, encouraging personal interpretation and emotional connection. The artwork resonates with a profound sense of collective longing for transparency, fairness, and accountability in governance. Through the amalgamation of abstract and realistic elements, Ananaba's "Give Us Our Daily Fuel" serves as a compelling testament to the power of art in conveying societal concerns. Ibe Ananaba ignites a conversation about social change and the collective yearning for a brighter future. "Give Us Our Daily Fuel" stands as a potent reminder of art's ability to evoke emotions, spark dialogue, and inspire positive transformation within society.

In "Who goes first #2" by Ibe Ananaba, the primary signifier in the painting is the representation of three boys, positioned with their backs to the viewer as if engaged in a childhood game, possibly related to passing urine. These boys signify the artist's boyhood memories and evoke a sense of nostalgia. The background of the painting, transitioning from dark cool grey colors to lighter warm

hues at the foreground, serves as another signifier. This gradient signifies a sense of depth and perspective within the artwork, drawing the viewer's attention to the central figures. The bold and spontaneous pallet knife strokes represent another set of signifiers. These strokes symbolize the artist's passionate and expressive approach to the painting, adding texture and energy to the artwork. The rich and vibrant colors used for the subjects further contribute to the overall visual impact of the painting. These colors signify the artist's intention to convey interest and emotional connection to his boyhood memories. The composition of the boys engaged in a childhood game, the gradient background, and the energetic brushwork collectively symbolize the artist's attempt to capture and convey the essence of his nostalgic recollections. In this structural analysis, the different signifiers are dissected within the artwork and how they interrelate to create a cohesive representation of the artist's boyhood memories. The painting serves as a visual narrative of the artist's personal experiences, evoking emotions and inviting viewers to connect with their own childhood reminiscences.

Conclusion

The use of semiotics as an analytical framework in visual arts has gained prominence in recent decades. This study delves into the profound value of art, transcending its mere representation, and focuses specifically on the significance of semiotics and abstract realism in painting as a means of edification. The fusion of semiotics and abstract realism in the works of Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba demonstrates the potent synergy between artistic expression and meaning-making. Through their canvases, these artists navigate complex socio-cultural landscapes, offering viewers a window into their personal experiences, societal critiques, and imaginative interpretations. Saussurian structural analysis helped to unveil the semiotic layers embedded within their artistry, emphasizing the role of signs and symbols in conveying profound messages. Nwanne's visual juxtapositions, Idahosa's thought-provoking commentaries, and Ananaba's evocative narratives invite viewers to engage actively, to interpret, and to reflect upon the intricate tapestries they have woven.

The broader implications of this exploration underscore the resilience of Nigerian contemporary art in negotiating diverse influences while maintaining authenticity. These artists contribute not only to the discourse surrounding Nigerian art but also to the global conversation on the intersection of semiotics and visual storytelling. In the dynamic realm of contemporary art, the amalgamation of semiotics and Abstract Realism serves as a testament to the enduring power of artistic expression. Jimmy Nwanne, Harrison Idahosa, and Ibe Ananaba stand as exemplars of this fusion, offering viewers an opportunity to transcend the visual and delve into the profound world of symbols, signs, and the boundless potential of human creativity. Through their artworks, they beckon us to embrace the complexities of meaning and embark on a journey of artistic discovery.

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