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Indigenous Identity and Hybridization in Painting: A Critical Review

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Abstract
The preservation of indigenous identity in African painting faces major challenges in the context of globalization and cultural hybridization. As contemporary African artists navigate a rapidly evolving artistic landscape, the merging of traditional artistic expressions with external influences raises critical questions about authenticity and originality. This article critically examines the interplay between indigenous identity and hybridization, emphasizing how these dynamics redefine artistic practices and cultural narratives. Indigenous identity, deeply rooted in cultural heritage and symbolism, is at risk of dilution as artists incorporate global influences into their work. The review highlights various scholarly perspectives on the tension between modernity and tradition, exploring how African artists adapt their practices while striving to maintain connections to their cultural roots. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the importance of preserving indigenous identity amidst hybridization, advocating for a balance that credits traditional practices while embracing innovative expressions.

Keywords: *Indigenous Identity, Hybridization, African Painting*

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Introduction

Indigenous identity in painting is deeply rooted in cultural heritage, symbolism, and traditional artistic expressions. Historically, African art has served as a medium for storytelling, spiritual representation, and communal identity, reflecting the values and beliefs of various ethnic groups. However, with the increasing influence of globalization, migration, and technological advancements, African painting has undergone significant transformation through hybridization—a process that merges indigenous artistic traditions with external influences to create new visual narratives. This evolution raises critical questions about the preservation of cultural identity, the impact of external artistic elements, and the role of hybridization in shaping contemporary African art.

Hybridization in African painting is not merely a fusion of styles but a dynamic process that redefines artistic identity. Scholars argue (Visagapperumal & Akpang, 2022) that cultural hybridity results from historical interactions, including colonialism, trade, and modern artistic exchanges, leading to the blending of indigenous techniques with foreign artistic conventions. This phenomenon has given rise to a new wave of African artists who incorporate Western, Asian, and other global influences into their work while maintaining a connection to their indigenous roots. The tension between tradition and modernity in African painting has sparked debates on authenticity, originality, and the evolving definition of African artistic identity.

In the rapidly changing landscape of today's world, globalization has woven our lives together more than ever. As a result, contemporary art has emerged as one of the most vibrant expressions of human creativity—it's a thrilling yet contentious arena within the humanities (Akpang, 2020). Contemporary African artists have embraced hybridization as a means of expanding their creative boundaries and engaging with global audiences. The exploration of cultural hybridity in African painting highlights the adaptability of indigenous identity in response to changing artistic landscapes. As Anna Guasch (2018) opines, contemporary art production and its critical reception around the world can be readily identified with notions of 'the global' and 'globalization'. One cannot deal with the terms global and globalization without relating them to hybrid and hybridism (Visagapperumal & Akpang, 2022). While some critics (Odibo, 2005; Clement, 2013) argue that hybridization dilutes traditional African art forms, others contend that it enriches artistic expression by allowing artists to reinterpret their heritage in innovative ways. This literature review examines scholarly perspectives on Indigenous identity and hybridization in painting, analyzing how artists navigate the complexities of cultural fusion while preserving their artistic heritage.

Indigenous Identity

Indigenous identity encompasses the distinctive expressions of colors, lines, shapes, and textures that characterize African paintings. According to Nkom (1992), an individual's indigenous identity serves as a unique stamp that sets them apart from others, reflecting their uniqueness and existence. Abodunrin (2019) emphasizes that indigenous artists, in this context, are traditional creators whose practices are rooted in their local environment, free from Western influence. Observing our society reveals that culture is an essential tool for Africans. Cultural expression and identification are evident in the daily lives of people within the community. This is illustrated by the numerous art activities present in every African society. A community lacking indigenous art practices, particularly painting, risks losing its indigenous identity, especially in the face of modernity, where traditional elements are often dismissed as "old-fashioned" or "primitive" (Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, Oyinloye (2009) notes the decline of rich, meaningful traditional motifs and symbols in contemporary African

artworks, which have increasingly been replaced by modern forms and elements influenced by various factors, including colonialism, as well as the more recent impacts of globalization, industrial mass production, and technology.

The new approach to promoting indigenous African arts and integrating traditional knowledge into the curriculum of various colleges in Nigeria was successfully introduced. The efforts of the new instructor yielded early results, as the number of Nigerian art instructors increased, and awareness of traditional works, such as Uli body and wall paintings, became more pronounced. However, Murray's efforts had a limited long-term impact due to the colonial and Western government in power, which introduced a new way of life that gradually shifted society from traditional styles to Western culture. Indigenous art forms are characterized by traditional subjects, styles, and techniques that are relevant within the African context. Nigeria, a populous nation in Africa, is home to several ethnic groups, each with different socio-cultural affinities. Consequently, Nigeria's art forms have historically varied in terms of subjects, styles, and materials used.

Egonwa (2000) noted that the loss of indigenous identity in African painting occurs when artists lack consistency in their use of African colors, lines, shapes, and textures. Akatakpo (2000) suggested that maintaining a consistent style in African visual elements—representing indigenous identity—in hybridized painting is crucial for effectively communicating the intended message. Creative expressions of colors, lines, shapes, and textures that adhere to established standards in African hybridized paintings may help minimize this loss of indigenous identity. Supporting this, Triyono (2020) argued that achieving an authentic African painting relies on consistent use of line, color, shape, and other elements in African artworks. Makinde and Aremu (2014) indicated that various stimulants, such as patterns, symbols, color schemes, proportions, and themes, serve as clear indicators of specific historical, religious, traditional, and socio-cultural contexts found in original African art. Dutton (2003) further emphasized that indigenous identities in African art are characterized by visual abstractions, cultural symbolisms, or creative expressions. These identities are expressed using distinct African lines, colors, shapes, and textures (Clement, 2013).

The assertion by contemporary artists is that African artists lack an indigenous art identity (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). The term "African Art" is often viewed as a primitive and simplistic representation of art. Consequently, Odibo (2005) found in his study that some contemporary African artists have sacrificed elements of their indigenous identity in favor of Western-inspired art styles driven by the global creative advancements of the 21st century. These artworks are often seen as inauthentic and lacking true originality in their forms, colors, textures, lines, and shapes. Clement notes that appropriated genres of modern African art still struggle for global recognition because Contemporary art connoisseurs frequently dismiss them as inauthentic due to an overwhelming tendency to imitate Contemporary art styles (Clement, 2013). This lack of recognition stems from the perception that African artists do not demonstrate the originality needed to enhance the potential of their work in terms of forms, styles, colours, shapes, and symbols (VanCamp, 2007). According to Rasmussen (2006), an artist is considered authentic in Africa when they have expressive authenticity in mind. This means an artist should not only be skilled at painting but also possess an understanding of what makes their images unique to specific cultures or traditions.

Many scholars have explored the challenges of indigenous identity in African art (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). Indigenous identity in African art has multiple facets rooted deeply in the socio-cultural contexts of the communities involved. These facets may include choices of

subject matter, use of color, lines, textures, shapes, patterning techniques, symbols, and the overall appearance of the artworks. The main argument is that African art forms can be identified not solely because they are produced in Africa by Africans, but because they possess distinct forms (colors, textures, lines, shapes), styles, aesthetics, and traditional values associated with the African environment and overall well-being (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). The identification process requires consideration of the socio-religious and cultural norms, linking them to the foundational aspects of both traditional and contemporary idioms. Finding authentic African art is challenging, as many pieces have become commodified due to globalization (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). Murray's pedagogy posits that students should be encouraged to create art that reflects purely African lines, colors, textures, and shapes, rather than mimic Contemporary artistic styles (Abodunrin, 2019). In this context, students in colleges of education will create hybridized paintings using African lines, colors, textures, and shapes, with subsequent assessments measuring the levels of indigenous identity present in these hybridized works.

Concept of Hybridization

Hybridization in art occurs when two or more types of material culture combine to create new, original innovations (Shiner, 1997; Ahmed, 2016). This process involves separating existing forms from their traditional practices and recombining them with new forms in a contemporary context (Ahmed, 2016). Kappenberg (2010) argued that hybridization in art is exemplified by contemporary experimentalists who merge art with science, visual arts with performance art, and three-dimensional art with digital technology. For instance, Odibo (2009) highlights artists such as Rob Kesseler, who fuses art and science by working with microscopic plant materials, and MacKenzie, who juxtaposes visual arts, performance, and art therapy. Contemporary artists are increasingly required to create paintings and installations that reflect indigenous identities. Through hybridization, contemporary African artists have been able to produce unique and authentic works. One notable example is an installation of print motifs modified from African symbols and assembled into a cohesive unit (Clement, 2013).

Janice (in Ahmed, 2016) asserts that material culture pertains to concrete objects. It has been established that African material culture has long been a vital feature of contemporary African art (Odibo, 2009). As a result, contemporary African paintings that blend African colors, lines, shapes, and textures are regarded as distinct forms of art, symbolizing indigenous identity and originality (Shiner, 1997). Furthermore, combining elements of African material culture in painting is believed to lead to the creation of authentic African artworks. Traditional lines, shapes, textures, and colors have been integral to society. When lines, shapes, textures, and colors from two different African communities are mixed, this results in hybridization. In this study, we selected painting styles from the Hausa and Igbo communities of Nigeria, as they offer a range of indigenous colors, forms, lines, and textures when combined.

Many African societies have developed unique and detailed paintings that reflect their tribal traditions, identities, and ideologies using material culture since prehistoric times (Ogumor, 1993). African expressions of lines, shapes, textures, and colors that hybridize with Western cultural symbols have often been deemed inauthentic to the African expression of indigenous identity by contemporary African artists (Odibo, 2009). Consequently, today's African artists are more inclined to combine traditional expressions of lines, shapes, textures, and colors from one community with symbols from another community's tradition, aiming to achieve an authentic indigenous identity free from Western influences. However, scholars have argued that the hybridization of African and Contemporary styles is often regarded as inauthentic

and is therefore discouraged (Van Camp, 2007; Odibo, 2009; Kappenberg, 2010). Conversely, the hybridization of African expressions of lines, shapes, textures, and colors can lead to the production of authentic African paintings and the promotion of indigenous identity (Yinka et al., 2013). Although hybridization is gaining acceptance among contemporary artists, more efforts are needed to produce paintings and installations that are authentic and reflective of Indigenous identity. This study will test these findings to determine the level of indigenous identity in the hybridized paintings created by college students.

Bhabha's Theory of Cultural Identity (1994)

The theory of cultural identity, also known as the theory of hybridity, as proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, allows researchers to explore the complex and multifaceted nature of indigenous identity. This theory examines how colonized peoples have navigated the power dynamics established by colonizers. It emphasizes the interrelated and interdependent identities of both the colonized and the colonizers. Bhabha asserts that the space between fixed identities creates opportunities for cultural hybridity, which embraces differences without imposing a hierarchy. The theory highlights that hybridity, when viewed from the minority's perspective, requires ongoing negotiation between their own culture and the culture imposed upon them through power struggles. Bhabha argues that the minority's effort to preserve their traditions compels them to negotiate the challenges posed by colonizers. As a result, an in-between hybrid form of heritage emerges.

Through negotiations, the continuous flow of inherited heritage undergoes a process of redefinition. Bhabha discusses the concept of mimicry, explaining how colonized people, particularly Africans, imitate the behaviours of their colonizers as a means of reform or civilization. This act of mimicry transforms the observer into the observed. The mimicry of colonized individuals presents the colonizer's "normalized" behaviour as a potential threat. By adapting to and mimicking the behaviours of their colonizers, the colonized people reflect on the narratives and distorted images imposed upon them by the colonizers. This mimicry fosters a new form of colonized culture, as individuals strive to survive by appearing both similar to and different from their colonizers. Hybridity within indigenous communities showcases the impact of Western influence on indigenous identity and art, a result of colonization. To comprehend these art forms fully, one must consider the dual experience of colonialism and assimilation into Western culture in Africa (Bhabha, 1994). This influence is apparent in contemporary indigenous culture, where many African people have adopted aspects of Western lifestyles. It can also be observed in African art forms that continuously negotiate their position between traditional expressions and Western art styles, often referred to as modern or contemporary art.

Bhabha's theory of cultural identity, particularly the concept of hybridity, is foundational for this study as it examines the influence of Western art styles, specifically painting, on indigenous artworks produced in Africa. Modern African artists, in their quest for relevance, often compromise traditional cultural identities by adopting colonial techniques regarding colour, texture, line, and shape. This results in African paintings reflecting a Western style imposed by colonizers. Throughout history, indigenous identities have been shaped by the repercussions of these colonial norms. In order to survive, indigenous cultures (specifically in Africa) negotiate their artistic practices by integrating some of these imposed behaviours while also finding new ways to express their traditions. Unfortunately, this has led to a distortion of indigenous identities in African paintings.

Colonialism and its lasting effects have significantly influenced the character of modern African art. It has led to the emergence of two distinct groups of artists: one group advocates for a complete rejection of Western influences and a return to traditional sources, while the

other embraces contemporary Western styles, trends, and techniques. A third group employs a naturalistic approach, drawing inspiration from traditional African classical art. The Western fascination with "primitivism" in African art, coupled with a desire to connect these works to African ethnicity, reveals a level of contradiction and misunderstanding. Despite these challenges, a growing number of artists are striving to reconcile their traditional identities with the need to challenge dominant narratives, seeking to assert their cultural heritage in contemporary art. Therefore, this study aims to promote the retention of Indigenous identities in painting while minimizing the impact of Western influences stemming from colonization and other forms of mimicry. Overall, Bhabha's theory of cultural identity serves as a suitable framework for this review.

Exploration of Indigenous Concepts in Painting

Painting as a two-dimensional art form is highly expressive. It consists of the organization of ideas in terms of lines and colour upon any surface (Ngumah, 2006). Ngumah further defines painting as the application or spreading of colours on any given surface to create an effect with the aid of brushes and a painting or palette knife. Painting is the practice of applying paint, pigment, colour, or other medium to a solid surface (Merriam-webster.com, 2012). The medium is commonly applied to the base with a brush, but other implements, such as knives, sponges, and airbrushes, can be used. In art, the term "painting" describes both the act and the result of the action (the final work is called "a painting"). The support for paintings includes such surfaces as walls, paper, canvas, wood, glass, lacquer, pottery, leaf, copper, and concrete. More so, the painting may incorporate multiple other materials, including sand, clay, paper, plaster, gold leaf, and even whole objects. Painting is an important form of visual art, bringing in elements such as drawing, composition, gesture, narration, and abstraction. According to Perry (2014), paintings can be naturalistic and representational (as in still life and landscape painting), photographic, abstract, narrative, symbolistic (as in Symbolist art), emotive, or political. Thomas (2012) stated that the art of painting developed from the primitive cave decorations of prehistoric times to the highly sophisticated and varied processes used today. Painting is the expression of ideas and emotions, with the creation of a certain aesthetic language. Therefore, in the Indigenous style of paintings, this creative expressionism must conform to the elements.

According to Abodunrin (2019), the forms of Nigeria's indigenous painting are part of Nigeria's history and have served specific purposes in the era of their creation. Such purposes may have been for either traditional or religious activities, which define the culture of such a tribe within Africa's geography. For instance, the Igbos made bronze ceremonial vessels a part of their cultural heritage, while the Yorubas have been known for their poetic and artistic history. They specialized in making sculptures that often represented a deity of some sort. The Hausa-Fulani art is somewhat associated with their daily way of living, such as farming and animal rearing. It is, however, mostly influenced by their religious beliefs and spirituality. In traditional paintings in Africa, all these regional forms are reflected in our works, and the materials are locally sourced. The materials, ranging from raw materials from plants and earth colours, are used to depict various cultural themes of painting.

The exploration of indigenous concepts in painting has since been an engaging issue in the minds of many contemporary artists. Although available artworks (paintings) made by contemporary artists in Africa reveal such an experimental trend for the sustenance of the rich artistic and cultural heritage of Africa, especially Nigeria (Thomas, 2012). Art is a living tradition in Africa. Contemporary African art derives its inspiration from traditional models but employs new techniques and materials (Shorter, 1998). It is unfortunate to know that the so-called colonialism in Africa had adversely affected our people socially, economically,

politically, religiously, and culturally (Thomas, 2012). No doubt, this same colonial infection was extended to the art of Africa - the concepts, ideas, styles, and forms of African art. However, the white man's culture has interwoven and interrupted, and relegated our art and culture. Before this time, the Africans had and were satisfied with their creative urges and abilities in terms of theme, idea, style, form, and concepts. Therefore, the revival of African art and culture is possible and achievable through constant and further exploration of indigenous concepts, ideas, style, form, theme, and so on in paintings. Murray's pedagogy is the belief that students should be encouraged to create paintings along purely African lines, texture, colour, shapes and forms rather than be made to imitate Contemporary artistic styles and forms (Thomas, 2012). Artists such as Uche Okeke took to their regional forms to achieve a distinctive identity.

Exploring indigenous concepts like – Ezeship (Coronation), Aladima, Ikenga, marriage ceremony, fishing ponds, cultural dances, wrestling festivals, farming season, politics, religion, burnt shrine and others, definitely pushes Africa very close to its way of life and happening around its society. Artists should know that paintings with indigenous concepts are prone to patronage, especially if the idea is clear and unique. This study focuses on producing hybridized paintings by using Murray's pedagogy to determine the retention of Indigenous identity. The ensuing subsection will focus on the use of Indigenous lines, colours, textures, shapes in forms in hybridized paintings.

Application of Elements of Art and Design in Indigenous hybridized paintings

The following subsections focus on the application of elements of art and design, such as colours, lines, textures, and shapes in African hybrid paintings.

Use of colour in Indigenous hybridized paintings

Color is an element made up of hues, which have three properties: hue, chroma (or intensity), and value (Visual Arts, 2020). Color occurs when light strikes an object and is reflected into the eye, triggering a response in the optic nerve (Esaak, 2020). The first property is hue, which refers to the distinct color, such as red, blue, or yellow. The second property is value, which indicates the lightness or darkness of a hue (Esaak, 2020). The last property is chroma, or intensity, which differentiates between strong and weak colors.

In many art styles and periods, the functions of color have primarily been decorative and descriptive. Often, colors serve simply to reinforce the expression of an idea or subject communicated primarily through line and tone. However, in much of modern painting, the wide range of pigments available has allowed color to become the primary expressive element. In Indigenous painting, the principal dimensions of color are the variables or attributes of hue. These hues are often used in complex combinations, including red, yellow, white, and black. Based on evidence from cave paintings, historians now believe that Africans have been using body paint for approximately 7,000 years.

African expression in paintings has to do with flat background, no blending of colour, no tonal gradation and raw colour (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). In the typical African colour palette, warm tones containing a hint of brown predominate: umber, terracotta, burnt yellow and orange, ochre in all of its nuances, burgundy, desert sand (Makinde & Aremu, 2014). Tones that recall not only the sun and the soil but also natural pigments deriving from local trees and plants are found. Without these colour techniques, the African expression of colour in hybridized paintings will be lost (Odibo 2009, Kappenberg, 2010).

Use of line in Indigenous hybridized paintings

Indigenous lines possess distinctive expressive qualities. Lines serve as an intuitive and fundamental method for representing various subjects. In many African paintings throughout history, the interplay of thick and thin lines, broken and continuous lines, as well as sinuous and jagged lines, creates contrasts and repetitions that are vital to the design. The indigenous style of line work in African paintings includes vertical, horizontal, diagonal, zigzag, and curved lines, with other types being variations of these five main categories. Lines can have numerous physical characteristics; they may be short or long, thin or thick, straight or curved, direct or meandering, zigzag or serpentine, distinct or blurred. Additionally, lines can be arranged horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, and they can be straight, curved, or free-form. Their qualities can range from thick to thin and light to dark, with a single line sometimes embodying multiple traits simultaneously. Lines can be further described as dashed, dotted, rough, smooth, zigzag, or implied. Researchers such as Kappenberg (2010), Clement (2013), and Triyono (2020) have argued that indigenous identities in hybridized paintings are expressed through the use of African lines.

Use of texture in Indigenous hybridized paintings

Texture is used to describe the surface quality of the work, referencing the types of lines the artist created (Roxo, 2020). The surface quality can either be tactile (real) or strictly visual (implied) (Visual Arts, 2020). Tactile surface quality is mainly seen through three-dimensional works, like sculptures, as the viewer can see and/or feel the different textures present, while visual surface quality describes how the eye perceives the texture based on visual cues (Esaak, 2020). An artist should not only know how to paint images, but also be familiar with what makes their painted images peculiar to certain cultures or traditions. Kappenberg (2010), Clement (2013); Triyono (2020) found that texture in African artworks that is consistently painted produces a sense of authentic African painting that contains its indigenous identity.

Use of shape in Indigenous hybridized paintings

A shape is an enclosed area of space created through lines or other elements of the composition. A shape is a two-dimensional design encased by lines to signify its height and width structure, and can have different values of color used within it to make it appear three-dimensional. In animation, shapes are used to give a character a distinct personality and features, with the animator manipulating the shapes to provide new life. There are different types of shapes an artist can use and fall under either geometrical, defined by mathematics, or organic shapes, created by an artist. Simplistic, geometrical shapes include circles, triangles and squares, and provide a symbolic and synthetic feeling, whereas acute angled shapes with sharp points are perceived as dangerous shapes. Rectilinear shapes are viewed as dependable and more structurally sound, while curvilinear shapes are chaotic and adaptable.

Sometimes shapes do not result from the artist producing a shape, but from the background spaces around, within, or between created shapes; they are then the result of negative space. African paintings have in them the oval-shaped, triangular-shaped, square-shaped, triangular-shaped, or diamond-shaped objects. Kappenberg (2010), Clement (2013); Triyono (2020) found that shapes in African artworks that are consistently painted produce a sense of authentic African painting that contains its indigenous identity.

Indigenous Identity and Its Effects on Hybridized Painting

The effect of Indigenous identity in painting is not only seen in its representation of culture, people, spirituality, and mysticism, but also in the compositional elements used in its treatment of the objects. It is understood in its treatment with strong, bold or hard lines,

colours, textures and shapes or patterns (Freeborn, 2005). Freeborn (2005) had asserted that authentic indigenous identity only came in the work of a genuine artist through attention to skill and materials, along with sincerity of practice. Barber and other artists assert through their work that African subject matter and symbols are essential to an expression of African identity (Freeborn, 2005). In the typical African colour palette, warm tones containing a hint of brown predominate: umber, terracotta, burnt yellow and orange, ochre in all of its nuances, burgundy, desert sand (Makinde & Aremu, 2014).

Studies conducted by previous researchers (Van Camp, 2007, Odibo, 2009, Kappenberg, 2010) found that hybridization of Contemporary and African expressions of colours, lines, texture and shapes are however considered not original due to influences of contemporary expressions of colour hues, tonal gradation, intensity, and tones which make some of the characteristics of Indigenous identity expressions of colours, lines, shapes and texture to disappear. To buttress these findings, Yinka et al. (2013) found that Contemporary expressions of colour hues, tonal gradation, tones, have dominated African expressions of cheerful colour, row colours, flat colours and repetitions of zigzag lines, spiral lines, dot lines, triangular lines, curve lines, vertical and horizontal lines in painting.

Shiner (1997) found that contemporary African paintings created through the combination of material culture that are indigenous to the environment without traces of external influence are considered to be special forms of art, indicating the retention of cultural identity and originality. Moreover, it is argued that combining African compositional elements in the treatment of hybridized paintings led to the production of original African paintings compared to the contemporary African paintings dominated by Contemporary compositional elements (Odibo, 2009).

Kalilu and Abodunrin (2015) conducted a study on the typological analysis of forms of painting in Nigeria, with a view to determining the variations in the forms of painting. Samples for the study were 1,120 paintings, produced between 1970 and 2013 by academically trained artists, randomly collected in field work conducted between 2010 and 2013. A detailed typology was done using size and shape, media and genre. The study established that the paintings come in three shapes in order of preference and occurrence, viz: rectangle, square and circle. For size, they come in a pecking order of occurrence of medium size, large size and small size. Media-wise, oil paint is the most preferred and next to which is acrylic, mixed media, water colour, ink, gouache/poster and pastel. Four genre categories, respectively of figural painting, landscape painting, still-life painting and non-objective painting, were established.

Adenaike (in Kalilu & Abodunrin, 2015) examined the cultural influence of Ulli on the painting practices in the contemporary Nsukka art school, Nigeria. The study revealed that the treatment using strong lines, colours, texture and shapes led to the retention of cultural identity in the paintings produced by art students. Okediji (1992) and Campbell (2008) in separate studies discussed and highlighted the peculiarities of the mural paintings in some Yoruba palaces and shrines. Chukueggu (1998) in a classification of Nigerian art made references to paintings among other art forms. Abodunrin's (2004) study in non-verbal communication was premised on colour symbolism among the Yoruba as a paradigm for Nigerian painters while Olusegun and Triyono (2020) found that indigenous identities in hybridized paintings are created using African lines, colours, texture and shapes.



Figure 1: African Hybridized Painting with Contemporary Influence

The diagram (Fig. 1) illustrates an African hybrid painting. A closer examination reveals a blurring of sharp or hard edges regarding colours, textures, shapes, and lines. Contemporary influence is evident in the way the boundaries between shapes, lines, colours, and textures are indistinguishable. This blending of colours and tones creates a gradual transition rather than employing hard edges or borders to define these elements in the painting (Oyinloye, 2015).

The soft transitional boundaries among colours, lines, shapes, and varying tones, coupled with the absence of hard edges, distort traditional African expressions in what are termed African paintings. This is evident through the subtle gradation of colours and the gradual merging of one tone into another (Clement, 2013). However, the approach to softening transitions between colours, lines, and shapes experiences significant changes in African hybrid paintings.



Figure 2: African Hybridized Painting with Contemporary Influence

The diagram above illustrates a painting that combines African art with contemporary influences. Upon closer inspection, one can observe a notable absence of sharp or hard edges in terms of colour, texture, shape, and lines. The contemporary influence is evident in the

difficulty of distinguishing where one shape, line, colour, or texture begins and ends. This blending of colours and tones facilitates a gradual transition rather than relying on hard edges or defined borders to delineate boundaries between colours, lines, shapes, and textures (Saibu, 2019).

The soft, transitional boundaries among colours, lines, shapes, light, and dark tones, along with the lack of hard edges, have distorted traditional indigenous expressions in what are often labelled indigenous paintings. This is evident in the subtle gradation of colours and the gradual melding of one tone into another (Emeka, 2018). This method of softening transitions between colours, lines, and shapes undergoes significant changes in hybridized indigenous paintings.



(Hard or sharp transition) **(Soft or smooth transition)**

Figure 3: Indigenous hybridized painting (left), Contemporary hybridized painting (right)

The painting exemplifies a fusion of traditional and contemporary elements, characterized by the coexistence of sharp lines and soft edges. On the left side, the Indigenous hybridized painting showcases vibrant colours and bold textures that reflect traditional African art. The sharp transitions highlight the distinct boundaries between shapes, creating a striking visual impact that emphasizes cultural heritage. In contrast, the right side features a contemporary hybridized painting, where soft and smooth transitions blend lines and colors, evoking a sense of fluidity and modern sensibility. The gentle merging of textures and shapes suggests a more abstract interpretation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the fusion of indigenous identity and hybridization in African painting highlights the ongoing balance between tradition and modern influences. While hybridization enables artists to experiment with new techniques and reach broader audiences, it also poses the challenge of preserving authentic cultural heritage. African painters must navigate this delicate intersection by finding ways to innovate while staying true to their roots. Understanding how to maintain cultural identity while embracing external artistic influences will be key to shaping the future of African art in a globalized world.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools and universities should actively incorporate indigenous artistic techniques into their art programmes. This means introducing students to traditional materials, methods, and cultural symbolism, ensuring that younger generations develop a deep appreciation for African artistic heritage while also learning how to adapt these elements in modern artistic expressions.

2. Governments and cultural institutions should establish grants, residencies, and exhibition opportunities for indigenous artists. Direct financial support and mentorship programs can help artists sustain their careers, innovate, and gain wider recognition while ensuring traditional art forms remain relevant in contemporary spaces.

3. Public engagement initiatives, such as nationwide art festivals, interactive museum exhibitions, and community workshops, should be organized to raise awareness about the importance of indigenous art. Schools and local organizations can partner to host cultural events that immerse participants in traditional African artistic practices.

4. Ongoing research efforts should focus on documenting indigenous artistic techniques, regional painting styles, and the impact of hybridization on artistic identity. Collaborations between universities, cultural centres, and professional artists can create archives, digital platforms, and academic resources that preserve and share these artistic traditions.

5. Open forums, discussion panels, and symposiums should be facilitated to encourage dialogue among artists, educators, and cultural leaders. These gatherings would allow for deeper conversations on the influence of hybridization, the preservation of cultural authenticity, and the evolving role of indigenous African painting in a globalized art scene.

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