

LIGHT AND LIGHTING AESTHETICS IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN PAINTINGS

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Abstract

Light or lighting is a universal element that is natural, as seen in the sun, the moon, the stars and lightning. It is also man-made, as contrived in electricity, lamps, fires and even in representations of illusion by artists. As an instrument of communication and a subject of aesthetic discourse, light(ing) is usually associated with the performing arts. Not much attention is given to it as a vital component in the visual arts where it is used for modelling and projecting three-dimensionality on two-dimensional surfaces. Commonly referred to as “light and shade” or “chiaroscuro”, the artistic functions of light(ing) in some painting genres are to beautify, contrast, emphasize and solidify imagery. While acknowledging light(ing) as a major device of enhancement of art in galleries, this study examines the light(ing) phenomenon globally in artistic civilizations through selected artists and their works; with particular emphasis on some selected contemporary Nigerian paintings of artists like Kolade Oshinowo, Nike Okundaye, Tola Wewe, Abiodun Olaku, Sam Ovrati and Edosa Ogiugo. The different aesthetic effects and spectacles achieved with the deployment of light(ing) are discussed against the backdrop of some global great masters like Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Van Gogh and some Impressionist painters. The study is library-based and involves observation and verbal interrogation of the selected paintings that have been newly typologized through light(ing) categories as: Separation, Symbolicon, Reflection, Illumination and Crystallization. The study submits that, firstly, light(ing) essentiality, in all spheres of the arts, takes different technical formulations, but that it ends ultimately with similar functionalities across cultures and civilizations. Secondly, that the new typological framework will assist an in-depth analysis of art. And thirdly, that with this light(ing) typology, the literary scopes of art research and methodology will be further enriched.

Keywords: Colour, Light, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Gogh, Kolade Oshinowo

Introduction

Light, with the process of its actualization, which is lighting, is generally accepted as a vital, technical element in the performing arts. When, however, the value, density, intensity and contrast of objects and planes are determined for the purpose

of aesthetic relevance in the visual arts, light and lighting (which will hereafter be written as light[ing] if both words are inferred in a sentence idea) equally serve the visual artist as vital, technical elements. This function is especially exhibited in the two dimensional (2D) genres such as

drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, batik painting and a few others more. In the foresaid visual art areas, light(ing) is built into the works or imageries to achieve diverse effects. While this is majorly an integral part for the art work itself, light(ing) can also function as exterior agent in the spatial environment where an art work domiciles. It can then be administered as a means to enhance displays in galleries, museums and homes. In the arts, light(ing) thus functions as both an end in itself and a means to an end, when its functionality is broadly expressed. Therefore, while light(ing) is expected to intrinsically amplify the content quality of 2D works, it will also help in the projection of ambiance in the enclosed or controlled space and in the three dimensional (3D) works.

Our study will hereafter concentrate only on the function and quality of light(ing) in some 2D fine and applied arts. In the 2D arts, light(ing) is commonly

called “light and shade” or “chiaroscuro”. Its function is to beautify, contrast, emphasize and solidify imageries, in order to achieve resemblance and the artist’s intended concept. Without its enhancement of the modelling and solidifying process of forms, the artistic expression results in flat imageries. Essentially, the proper application of light is one of the devices that create the illusion of three dimensionality on a two dimensional surface.

In analytical scope, the exemplification of light(ing) in this study is limited to the painting genres, because these genres embody the art specialization where the element of light(ing) is frequently manifested. Concentrating on these selected genres will also allow for a focused examination of the light(ing) phenomenon. The study’s theory, with its visual interrogation of the selected paintings, is tailored towards verbal interrogation and is largely qualitative and descriptive. For better insight into the

concept of visual interrogation, read Banks (2013) *Visual Methods*, Bryson (1991) *Vision and Painting*, Elkins (1996) *The Object Stares Back*, Foster (1996) *The Return of the Real*, and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) *Reading Images*.

In all, fourteen (14) samples have been selected from the several available sample population, based on their light(ing) suggestiveness, mannerism and suitability of its appropriation for this study. Thus, most of the samples used as illustrations have been randomly selected, they specially buttress the discourse perspective. Artists chosen, both western and Nigerian, have also been limited to a very small fraction of those that exceedingly explore light(ing) in their artistic outputs. A painting each has been selected of the works of the western artists and not more than three have been selected from the body of works of each of the Nigerian artists. The reason being that, on the one hand, these artists are the major focus of the study; and on the other, their

light(ing) styles and compositions are largely varied and typical. Likewise, the larger percentage of artists and works has been devoted to contemporary Nigerian artists.

It is, however, necessary at this juncture to quickly premise that, light(ing) is as old as art itself. Evidence of its usage abounds in cave paintings of the Upper Paleolithic era and the rock paintings and engravings of the Mesolithic's. The light element reflects its significance in two major ways. One, the painting and engravings were tucked inside the caves and rocks' dark recesses. De La Croix *et al.* (2005, p. 29) conclude that, "For light," the artists "used tiny stone lamps filled with marrow or fat, with a wick, perhaps, a moss." They further reiterated in their study Abbé André Glory's documentation, which indicated that at the Lascaux cave alone, Some 130 stone lamps have been found, and from the remains of their burnt tallow and wicks, it has been shown that their light

must have been as strong and steady as candlelight and must have lasted an hour at a time (De La Croix *et al.*, 2005, p. 29).

Like the theatre space where lights are particularly directed according to performance, lights for these early artists were inevitable, because their material space was dark and humid, and needed spotlights to help execute their works. Two, the images painted or engraved were limited in their tones, largely because of the materials available as medium. These tones were narrowed down to three: majorly the dark, the middle and the light tones. Even with these limited colour tones, the artists were able to achieve some 3-Dimensionalities in a few paintings. Though many of the paintings of the two separate periods were intentionally made flat and un-moulded, sufficient proofs abound in them to attest that artists of these early periods were versed in the importance of this technical process and means of attaining figural exactness (see images in

Adams, 1999, pp. 33-37). Likewise, this causal attribute of light could be traced in some of the Egyptian art (Olive, 2017).

Light and Lighting in the Paintings of Notable Western Masters

While artists of different epochs adopted light(ing) to varying degrees to suit their aesthetic preferences, it is equally acknowledged that Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the Italian High Renaissance artist, was a great master of the light technique (Chilvers, 2004). Some other notable masters that were vast in the light(ing) technique include Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Pissarro, Manet, Degas, Monet, Renoir, and van Gogh. Before Leonardo's displayed mastery of light and shade in painting were painters like Giotto di Bondone (c.1266-1337) and Masaccio (1401-1428). They had also been recognized as freeing painting from the stereotypical passive Byzantine tradition. They added naturalism and three dimensional illusion, based on lighting

innovations and accurate depiction of observed realities. Some of these examples can be viewed in Chilvers (2004, pp. 291, 446), Murray (1983, pp. 164, 257), Kleiner and Mamiya (2006, pp. 408, 464). Leonardo, however, added a notch to this mastery of light(ing) techniques through his skillful manipulation of *sfumato*, that is, “the soft blending of light tones into dark” (Levy 1964: p. 103). This can be observed in his paintings called *Mona Lisa* (Plate 1). In Leonardo’s notes on painting, he stated that “light and shade should blend ‘without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke’” (Murray, 1983, p. 384). Leonardo’s *sfumato* method was possibly the motivation and foundation for modern day painting style known as photo-realism.



Plate 1

Leonardo da Vinci (1503-1506, completed 1517). *Mona Lisa* (retouched). Oil on panel. 77 cm x 53 cm. Louvre, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mona_Lisa

Generally, what is noticed of many of the Renaissance paintings is the obsession of painters with light(ing) and its intersections on images/subjects. In some instances, light was intentionally exaggerated on image parts and the lighting on some other parts were reduced, cusped or vignetted (See Plates 1 and 3). Also popular with many painters was the light popped on images as if captured scenes were frozen from stage plays and theatrical performances (Compare Plates 2 and 3).

Michelangelo Merisi (1571-1610), the Italian painter popularly called Caravaggio—the name of the town he grew up near Bergamo—was another great exponent of lighting techniques. He was reputed to have exhibited robust and intense chiaroscuro, which made his painting highly naturalistic and his figures strongly lit against dark backgrounds (Murray, 1983, pp. 63, 64; Chilvers 2004, pp.127, 128). Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69), “regarded not only as the greatest Dutch painter but also as one of the world’s supreme creative artists” (Kitson, 1969, intro.), was perceived by Münz and Haak (1984) to have been influenced by Caravaggio’s works (see example in Plate 2) and this is evident in the fact observed by Kleiner and Mamiya (2006, p. 603) that Rembrandt’s “use of light is among the hallmarks of his style”. This was equally attested to by Kitson (1969, p. 5) who said, “...chiaroscuro is the basis of Rembrandt’s art”. Rembrandt’s mastery of light and

shade is remarkable (see Plate 3), not only in his ability to build spotlighted forms and figures out of dark backgrounds, but also from a psychological and spiritual depth (Münz & Haak, 1984). With this, he imbues his subjects with a unique attribute that makes it possible to read their character from their outward appearances, based on his rendition of their forms with subtly contrasting colours and adroit brushworks.



Plate 2

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1589-1599, or 1602). *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, Oil on canvas. 145 cm x 195 cm. Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Judith_Beheading_Holofernes_Caravaggio.jpg



Plate 3

Rembrandt van Rijn (1642). *The Night Watch*,
Oil on canvas. 363 cm x 437 cm. Amsterdam

Museum,

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Netherlands-4167 -](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Netherlands-4167_-_The_Night_Watch_%2811715123333%29.jpg)

[The Night Watch %2811715123333%29.jp](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Netherlands-4167_-_The_Night_Watch_%2811715123333%29.jpg)

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Wilson's 1990 study suggested that the impressionist artists built individuality, uniqueness and controversy around their style and aesthetic motivations. The *Native Visions Galleries* (n.d.) further explained that these characteristics are hinged on three main factors, which critical and philosophical studies were to later examine: the representation of light, emphasis on brush stroke and open-air composition. The impressionists explore the possibilities attainable from the interplay of lights with colours and their complementariness. The idea of understudying and rendering the

behaviour of both natural and artificial light on paper or canvas is basically the focus of many impressionists. Their posture became the hallmark of modern art as it is expressed today. As few artists became the light of artistic knowledge and technique in the eras before that of the impressionists, so were a few impressionists painters. Being primarily painters, some of these notable impressionists include Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).

Working mostly outdoor, these artists documented landscapes and actions under different seasons, weather conditions and moods through their depiction of the fleeting atmospheric luminosity of nature. Swinglehurst (1984) captured this of Monet by considering him as, "rendering ...ephemeral effects of light under diverse weather conditions: sunlight on water, a breeze stirring the poplar trees, fogs in

London, and morning, noon and evening light on Rouen Cathedral or haystacks”. Technically, the impressionists benefited from Chevreul’s scientific investigations into the behaviour of colours and “the physical character of light” (Murray, 1983, p. 205). Chevreul asserted that in the shadow cast by objects should be found complements of the colour(s) of the objects (Canaday, 1972). Consequent upon the impressionists’ explorations into light in their outdoor studies, their canvases brightened up, notwithstanding the painters’ individual stylistic approaches (Levy, 1964). Plates 4 and 5 illustrate two divergent light[ing] luminosities achieved by Pissarro and Monet. The use of black and brown colours that had usually resulted in the darkness and blackness of some parts of the painted scape were abandoned and the result is admired till date.



Plate 4

Camille Pissarro (1897). *The Boulevard Montmartre at Night*. Oil on canvas. 53.3 cm x 64.3 cm. Courtauld Fund, <https://images.app.goo.gl/Aoa3KLWjePrMNAat6>



Plate 5

Claude Monet (1864). *A Seascape, Shipping by Moonlight*. Oil on canvas. 60 cm x 73.8 cm. National Galleries of Scotland, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/a-seascape-shipping-by-moonlight-212711>

Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), the Post-Impressionist Dutch painter’s fascination for light(ing) was portrayed in the titles and themes of a good number of his paintings such as *Starry Night*,

Sunflowers, Vincent in Flames, Café Terrace, Potato Eaters, The Night Café, etc. The inherent sources of illumination of his paintings were usually elements such as the sun, moon, stars, or through artificial means like electricity or lamps. The *Starry Night*, for example, derives its evocative strength not only from the swirls of his alluring brush works, but also from the exaggerated twinkling stars that imbue the painting with brightness and unusual vitality. The use of heightened yellow to indicate the source(s) of illumination in many of his paintings made an exception of his works. He likened his intense yellows to musical notes. He was quoted as saying: “To attain the high yellow note that I attained last summer, I really had to be pretty well keyed up” (Swerdlow, 1997, pp.112, 122). Meyer Schapiro stated that Van Gogh “created a new art by replacing traditional light and shadow with bounded areas of pure colour—in hues drawn as

much from the artist’s mind as from nature” (Swerdlow, 1997, p. 119).

The list of Western artists whose works show significant mastery of light and shade, resulting in diverse artistic effects is inexhaustible. The few artists discussed above, however, suffice as an initial illustration that captures the essence of this study. It is equally important to briefly highlight the writers’ hypothesis that: Though many painters apply light to project nature in their subject matter to attain high aesthetic quality, yet a good number of them apply light majorly as expressions and/or vibrations of their thought-forms that could manifest either conceptually or abstractly. With this latter set of painters, object or form of expression on canvas are patterns which are presented mainly in tones, tints, values and densities of colour. (For clearer understanding of this conception, peruse Emslie and Fitzpatrick (2007, pp. 300, 385, 379) to view works in this category: Piet Mondrian’s *Composition*

with *Red, Blue and Yellow* (Plate 6); Shusaku Arakawa's *Movement* and Frank Stella's *Hyena Stomp* (Plate 7). There are also other kinds of painting that hardly, if at all, echo or project light(ing). Their connection with light are only sustained on the premise that an assumed light is projected on them by the viewer. Examples of this set of light(ing) typology are Clyfford Still's *1955-D*, Jules Olitski's *Non-stop*, Shusaku Arakawa's *War of the Worlds*. In summary, literatures on light(ing) have through the ages been a part of critical discourse on painting, but studying light and lighting from some of the foregoing perspectives is still peripheral. Based on this therefore, critical discourse on light(ing) has not been part of examination of some sets of painting. And from the brief testament into the not-too-obvious sensations of light(ing)—their form and value—there is occasional need for topical consideration and critical

evaluation of light and lighting in painting genres.

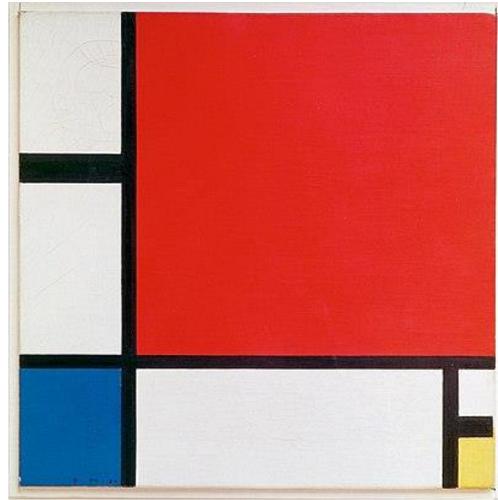


Plate 6

Piet Mondrian (1930). *Composition with Red Blue and Yellow*. Oil on canvas. 194.5 x 194.5 cm. Kunsthaus Zürich, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition with Red Blue and Yellow](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_with_Red_Blue_and_Yellow)



Plate 7

Frank Stella (1962). *Hyena Stomp*. Alkyd paint on canvas. 45 cm x 45 cm. ARC, NY & DACS, London, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/stella-hyena-stomp-00730>

In Nigeria some literatures discussed light (not even lighting) in paintings of some individuals, based mainly on the principles of light and shade, and its application. This pattern is understandable because of the taken-for-granted quality of light(ing) application in painting. In the light of this, this study brings to the fore a critical analysis of light(ing) applications and their inherent functionalities in the paintings of some Nigerian painters, with an intention to highlight light(ing) primary and technical roles, which have hitherto been considered secondary or inconsequential in artistic and academic discourse.

Light(ing) Typology and Light(ing)

Application of Selected Nigerian Artists

Works discussed in this segment are selected to highlight some five typological conceptions of light and lighting in the visual arts that are conceived by us. These identified light and lighting conceptions are: light(ing) as separator, reflector,

symbolicon, illuminator and crystallizer. By our conception and sampling, some art works by Kolade Oshinowo exemplify light(ing) as separators. Many current art works by Nike Davies-Okundaye and Tola Wewe present the symbolicon typology. Ninety per cent of Abiodun Olaku's works use light(ing) as reflector. Sam Ovranti usually adopt the illuminator's typology of light and lighting in visual arts. Edosa Ogiugo art works present light(ing) in pane crystallizations. Thus, application of light or lighting are usually done in unique ways that are very personal, most times spontaneous, but which are occasionally jettisoned by the painters for trials of other typologies. It is, therefore, necessary to state that the plates used hereafter are chosen to illustrate the identified typology and their peculiarities as demonstrated in the works of the artists. We have termed the typology and conceptual peculiarities as *Light and Lighting Characters in Painting* in this study. Before proceeding into the

discourse of light(ing) typology, brief biographies of the painters are provided.

Kolade Oshinowo (b. 1948) is undeniably one of Nigeria's most prolific and accomplished painters of our time (Ogunfuwa & Adeyemi, 2023). He was born in Ikorodu, Lagos State and trained as an artist at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, from 1968 to 1972. Owing to the different stylistic categories of his paintings, light is deployed variously to achieve different characteristic effects. Nike Davies-Okundaye (b. 1952) is a multi-talented artist, a textile designer, painter, dancer, actress and gallery owner. She, observed Onipede (2020), is possibly the most popular and institutionalized of the Osogbo trained artists, and perhaps the biggest rallying personality on the contemporary visual arts scene in Nigeria. Nike's deployment of light in art is to be appreciated mostly in her signature product: textile, and of course, her paintings, in which light is used to beautify

and contrast her mostly monochromatic colour schemes.

Abiodun Olaku was born in 1958 and trained at the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos. He is a naturalistic painter whose canvases present a delightful study in the dramatic use of light to achieve moods, depths, three dimensional effects, aesthetic allure and, sundry reflections. Tola Wewe (b. 1959) was part of those that founded the *Ona* movement, a movement that crystalized to glorify Yoruba ornamentation worldview in the visual arts. *Ona* artists trained at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and about the same time. But Sam Ovranti, born in 1961, trained at both the Auchu Polytechnic and the University of Benin. Just like Wewe, he is fascinated by the yellow colour. This is evident in many of his paintings in which the colour is stretched from its purest form into various tints up to whiteness, and tones into the darkest value. Edosa Ogiugo was born in 1961 and trained at the Yaba

College of Technology, Lagos. He is a painter with dazzling gestural brushstrokes, culminating in forms and interplay of tones, tints and highlights.

Analysis of Light and Lighting

Characters in Paintings of Selected

Contemporary Nigerian Artists

Figures and actions, objects and tensions, places and landscapes, captured by Kolade Oshinowo in pictorial spaces, are usually in manners peculiar to the artist. Being a naturalistic painter, the verisimilitude and three dimensionality of Oshinowo's subjects are achieved through skillful manipulation of light and shade that are subtle and layered. The source of light in his paintings could be the sky, the elements and their natural luminosity, it could also be the foreground, which, in such cases, are strongly lit and contrasted against dark background to create depth of field and three dimensional qualities. As a master painter, his handling of light and shade is legendary. Light assumes different

heuristic variations and fascination on his canvasses. View some of his paintings in [*Kolade Oshinowo Paintings & Artwork for Sale Kolade Oshinowo Art Value Price Guide \(invaluable.com\)*](#). But peculiarly in some of his other categories of painting, such as Plates 8 and 9—*Sisters* (2011) and *Harmony* (2016)—among others, images are almost silhouetted and are framed in bright, and sometimes halo-like, lights. These are examples of art works that utilize the Separator light(ing) typology. Any painting in this category shares similar treatment with Rembrandt's, where dark hued painting surfaces are opened up to intense or graded light that commands attention as the artist's focal point. (Again, view Plate 3). Light in this category is most times romanticized and made to appear in heightened colour, forming the brightest parts that trace/enclose/enframe images/objects in the paintings. Irrespective of light reflection of the image/object, the separator light acts

essentially as demarcator between the foreground and the background contents.



Plate 8

Kolade Oshinowo (2011). *Sisters*. Mixed media. 121 cm x 121 cm.

Source: Courtesy of Kolade Oshinowo



Plate 9

Kolade Oshinowo (2016). *Harmony*. Mixed media. 119 cm x 123 cm.

Source: Courtesy of Kolade Oshinowo

There are occasions when light(ing) acts as what we typologized as Symbolicon. In such a case, an object, subject, icon or symbol forms a part of an artistic composition and is amplified through its

colour indication in a painting. The image or representation becomes *symbolic* and *iconic* (symbol-icon) at the same time through its unique colour emphasis. Because of this representation, such painting becomes an abstraction or has its imagery distorted to achieve this aim. Light(ing) in this circumstance becomes subjective; that is, whatever be its colour range, from the brightest light to the darkest, it is the symbolic representation of the colour that attracts the viewer's attention. This is done not necessarily because light logically needs to strike the object or composition, but because the artist desires so. It is observed that in the symbolicon category of light(ing) application, most abstract, minimalist and abstract expressionist (Plate 6) paintings fall within this symbolicon typology.

The rendition of light in Nike Davies-Okundaye's *batik* and canvas paintings (Plate 10) follows the symbolicon pattern. Compositionally, light is diffused

in forms all over her canvas space. It is controlled and focused on certain objects or areas, contrasting strongly or mildly against deep indigo dyes or other chosen colours. Her wearable textiles are done mostly in flat designs, while degrees of modelling of forms are attained in her wall hangings and paintings. However, large stretches of waxed areas on the fabric are wrinkled to allow cracks, which allow dyes to penetrate and form webs of fine lines across the white, dye-resistant, waxed areas. Light is therefore symbolically created. The beauty of Davies-Okundaye's works is to be found not only in the sophisticated designs, patterns and compositions of her textiles that are largely derived from Yoruba lore, but also in her manipulation of light and dyes on the fabrics. Her concealment or exposure of parts of the fabric vary in intensity of light to achieve positive and negative spaces.



Plate 10

Nike Davies-Okundaye (2010). *Dream
Creatures 2*, Batik, 61.5 x 81 cm.

<https://www.artnet.com/artists/nike-davies-okundaye/dream-creatures-2-works-O7Kgt0W-SDpIEamQxXKSBA2>

Tola Wewe, like Davies-Okundaye, also illuminates his paintings through the use of negative space. This is a device through which the whiteness of the canvas is retained and harmonized into his colour schemes. This white spaces are occasionally washed or shaded into varying grades of tints, depending on his desired effect, a situation which brightens his canvas (Plate 11). The negative spaces in his paintings, according to him and Nike Okundaye, are what attracted the later to imbuing them with designs and led sometimes to their collaborations, which

have resulted in their co-authorship of many paintings (Akande & Onipede, 2020). But Wewe's light(ing) is not created for modelling or three dimensional purpose, since his paintings are flat, with little attention paid to spatial depth. Rather, his light representations are made for aesthetic and decorative reasons. They are essentially patterns that produce visual ornamentation, symbolic presentation and harmony of the pictorial space. (Also compare this light distribution with Plate 6 of Mondrian.) In other works, Wewe's lights are worked into the dark areas of colours, while his darks are conversely worked into areas of light colours, giving an overall impression of harmonious, linear and intricately woven *Onaistic* designs. He also explores the contrast and depth produced when very bright objects and figures are juxtaposed intermittently with silhouetted figures, creating distinctions in arrays of colours that become symbolic entities of a whole symbolism. With this, Wewe's light(ing)

typology as seen in most of his paintings also falls with the ambit of the symbolicon.



Plate 11

Tola Wewe (2016). *Woman Leading the People*. Acrylic. Size: Not indicated.
https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRmN6Qc_yPYRaQmlfeFY1NcjFV1kx8WGlmbUA&usqp=CAU

Light emphasis in Olaku's paintings is captured as an essence in a direct mirror of a primary natural or artificial light, which in turn produces or manifests another more valued light thereafter (Plate 12). In this instance, the secondary light portrayed is the key to the value of the painting. The correctness of secondary light, as dispensed by original light that is either natural or man-made, is the main target of painters relying heavily on reflection typology of

light. Reflection light(ing) dissolves concentrically the primary lights, or bounces on a reflector that diffuses it. In either case, it is the treatment of the reflection that dictates and enhances the overall quality of such paintings. The sun, the moon, the stars; the street lights, the car lights, the electric lights; the sparkles, the glasses, the fires and a few more in this category are sources of reflection light(ing). See Plates 4 and 5. While in most of the light(ing) categories the source of light and lighting is immaterial and not shown in the art work, the reflection category of light(ing) reveals the entire source.



Plate 12

Abiodun Olaku (2018). Lunar Watch. Oil,
99.06 x 132.08 cm

<https://www.grandmastersfineart.com/uploads/1/2/9/8/12985227/published/lunar-watch-a-story-of-lagos-39-x-52-inches-oil-on-canvas-2018.jpg?1541788948>

In analyzing Abiodun Olaku's paintings, therefore, areas of light and dark are broadly contrasted, with the dark parts or objects being silhouetted against the lights. His silhouetted figures and objects still display multiples of muted hues and tones, which help to enliven the dark portions of the canvases. Olaku is remarkable for dotting his canvases of night scenes with shimmering lights or reflections from light sources. The beauty of his paintings appears to be majorly centered on the play of light in achieving varied effects and moods, while also helping to model objects. Occasionally, his canvases are opened up to reflect daytime lighting and activities, while most times, they are romanticized and closed up in dusk or night scenes, with countless glows from the skylines, in alluring glitter and glamour, cascading down to the "wet" foregrounds of the paintings in vertical streaks and dashes of reflected lights and brush strokes, which

have become some of the hallmarks of his paintings.

Sam Ovralti, just like Wewe, leaves areas of negative spaces in his watercolour and other painting works. His display of light is mostly as an illuminator. Light is distributed on his images the way he pleases in order to highlight specificities, but he conditions them in a careful and authoritative manner. Plate 13 explains this more and Plates 1 and 2 also fall within the ambit of illumination typology. But Ovralti's long dalliance with the watercolour medium and his acclaimed mastery of its technicalities may have influenced his carrying over of the methods of watercolour into other media, such as oil and pastel where he also plays with negative space. Most of Ovralti's paintings belong in the upper scale of brightness on the colour spectrum and, as such, the vibrancy of palette and painting surfaces are maintained throughout a painting session. White is therefore constant in his

mixtures, but dexterously handled in such a manner that his combinations do not appear chalky, but brightens the canvas. His lights are derived from the elements, the whiteness of his supports, apparels and bodies of his subjects; almost anything can be contrived to throw light upon his paintings. His paintings illuminates in ways few artists can match.

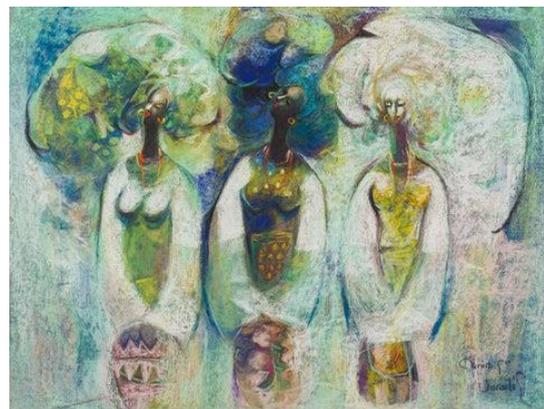


Plate 13

Sam Ovralti (2010). *Sisters*. Pastel, Size: Not indicated.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1051905708988590&set=a.1051905672321927>

Edosa Ogiugo painting approach is deliberately translucent in some parts, allowing the canvas to show through his thin layer of colours, resulting in generally bright paintings. In many of his paintings, light is introduced to the canvas through

brightly painted blouses, handkerchiefs, facial and bodily highlights and effects deployed to form backgrounds for forms or separate one item from the other. Whatever is the composition, his lights are usually attained through flashes of woven tones of colours, which in addition to helping to model the forms or attain spatial depth, also help in adding artistic glamour to his canvasses (Plate 14). His countable strokes are flashes of lights in varying degrees, acting like lights from marble crystals. While Ogiugo bold painterly strokes in different directions and colours are indications of light densities, Frank Stella's (Plate 7) rather graphical strokes are muted values of lights crystalized into planes and layers.

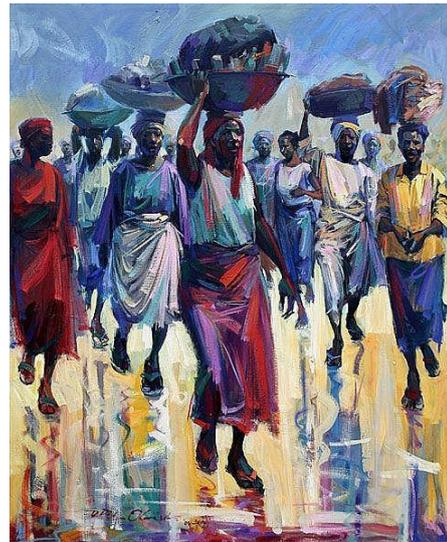


Plate 14

Edosa Ogiugo (2008/2009). *Our Mothers*. Oil on Canvas, 132 x 106.7 cm.
<https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/edosa-ogiugo-our-mothers-2008-2009-oil-on-canvas-%20%20%20%204-c-4c78fb77ab>

Conclusion

With the ability to convey gaiety or glumness, depending on its usage, light and lighting have continued to be one of the essential elements in painting, through different epochs; and in the hands of masters, it has lent freshness and timelessness to art. Light(ing), its aesthetic and modeling merits have been examined in this study. So also the immense creative possibilities attainable through its manipulation on two dimensional formats

have been highlighted. Though, known by the same terminology and most times its connotation of/as illumination, the realization of lighting in the dramatic and the visual arts involves different materials and procedures, which nevertheless results in almost aesthetic enhancement of the art form and art space, among its other qualities. Also the researchers have been able to further identify some classifications of light and lighting for the visual arts. Light and lighting have been typologized into the separator, reflection, symbolicon, illuminator and crystallization categories to assist in the in-depth analysis of artistic works. With this light(ing) typology, a plausible analytical dimension to seeing, reviewing and critiquing artworks has been triggered, which will further enrich the literary scopes of art research and methodology.

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