

SIMULATION AND APPROPRIATION OF SHOEPRINTS AS AESTHETIC IMPRESSIONS IN PAINTING

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Abstract

Shoeprints are abundant impressions found in our surroundings as people wear shoes and trek about. They are the marks created by the soles of shoes on surfaces. These impressions are aesthetic in their shapes and patterns but appear not to have been given serious attention by Nigerian painters. This article, therefore, examines the relevance of these seemingly ordinary environmental impressions, and their aesthetic and conceptual nature within the realm of art. The abundance of these environmental impressions (shoeprints) within the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria main campus stimulated interest in the theme, thereby compelling exploration of the subject matter through simulation of the prints (impressions) in painting. The objectives of the study were clearly stated, and the methodology was qualitative. The study identified that not many Nigerian painters have paid scholarly attention to these environmental impressions as art; the study can raise awareness about the intricate shapes and patterns as fundamental elements and principles of design; the fleeting aesthetics of the ephemeral shoeprints could be captured in painting for closer study and appreciation; conceptual art encourages the use of any object as art; the study encourages innovation and improvisation in painting among others.

Keywords: *Aesthetic, Environment, Shoeprint, Ephemeral and Forensic.*

Introduction

Every element of the Universe has a lifespan. Most of the elements or objects that are stable, consistent, with noticeable presence and have a longer life span tend to receive quality attention from people. However, objects that are not conspicuous and have shorter life spans are likely to attract the attention of only a few people with inquisitive minds. Shoeprints which are the marks left behind on surfaces as people trek about with their shoes have a short duration. In other words, these marks or impressions are ephemeral lasting only a short time. People hardly notice them and even when they do, their fleeting aesthetics and nature tend to escape any serious appreciation. Not many painters have given attention to the variety of shapes and patterns of these shoeprints, although adequate attention was taken in their design and production.

These impressions are created daily on footpaths and tiled or cemented surfaces in our surroundings when carefully observed. These impressions fall under two major categories. They are either geometric (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles) or they are organic (mimic patterns of nature like flowers or the waves of the sea) because of the irregularity of shapes and patterns. Both organic and geometric shoeprints (impressions) are further categorized into patent, plastic, or latent shoeprints. Patent shoeprints are visible impressions which result from trekking through substances like oil, paint or blood. Plastic shoeprints on the other hand

result when a shoe sinks into muddy surfaces, while latent shoeprints are not so visible to the naked eye because the surfaces are hard like cement or glass (Encyclopedia, 2019). The sole of a shoe is said to pick up various kinds of materials as a person walks and this is readily transferred to other surfaces, creating impressions that can reveal the shapes and patterns on the sole of the shoe.

Forensic scientists have done elaborate studies on shoeprints and regularly employ them to track criminals in their societies. It is, however, noteworthy to mention that humans sometimes make discoveries because of curiosity about elements in their environment. The motivation for this study stems from the researcher's curiosity about shoeprints which are abundant aesthetic impressions in our environment. Gray and Malins (2004) express that, it is about the willingness to examine other fields for sensible connections considering the complexity of art and design. Artists are fascinated and inspired by either natural or man-made objects within the environment, and they can make sense (perceive designs) of the things they see in equally different ways. This happens whenever individuals spend quality time observing and contemplating the presence of objects in their environment, such as the shoeprints. Observation of phenomena is, therefore, a basic training for visual artists, and it holds the key to most of the creativity and innovations in the visual arts. This assertion is

echoed by Bishop (2018), who states that “visual perception skills are the brain's ability to make sense.

From the period of cave paintings through the era of space exploration, during which Astronaut Edwin Aldrin photographed his shoeprints on the moon as reported by Spacekids (2012) to the present, some scientists and artists have been fascinated by foot and shoeprints, and they have used them to express themselves in a variety of ways. For example, Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) produced a painting titled 'Still-life with Old Shoes'. Cai Guo Qiang (b. 1957) conceptually created giant footprints in the sky using gunpowder, Andolsek Barbara (b. 1986) produced a symbolic footprint painting. In Nigeria, Sani Muazu Mohammed (b. 1959) adopted the human foot as brush to create conceptual paintings mimicking the Tiv Swange dance steps, Jacob Jari (b. 1960), popular for his use of discarded materials, produced a conceptual and symbolic painting suggesting footprints. Jerry Buhari (b. 1959) in his signature drip technique produced a painting revealing a lone footprint to address the issue of land grabbing and environmental pollution in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. Ayo Aina (b. 1969) made an installation depicting bloody footprints on canvas sandwiched by barbed wires, which he titled, “The Price of Freedom”. Exploration of this subject matter by these contemporary artists indicates that a study in this direction is worthwhile.

Statement of the Problem

Whenever people wear shoes and trek about, they leave behind them aesthetic prints on surfaces. They are seen almost everywhere. These shoeprints have fascinating shapes and patterns when closely observed. Forensic artists and scientists have been using footprints and shoeprints to track criminals in their societies. They have been interested in the shapes and patterns of the shoeprints which serve as leads in crime investigation. Also, graphic artists, textile designers, ceramists, sculptors, and painters have employed footprints, to express diverse concepts. The researcher, however, observed that there is a near absence of scholarly study with a primary focus on the shapes and patterns of shoeprints by Nigerian painters. They appear not to pay attention to these intricate and aesthetic impressions, hence this study.

Aim of the Study

This study aimed to harness shoe soles as improvised brush to create shoeprints paintings.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. To create shoeprint paintings on conventional surfaces like cardboard paper, chipboard,

strawboards, and canvas.

2. To create shoeprint paintings using mixed media
3. To identify and appropriate shoeprints found within the environment. in paintings
4. To conceptually produce shoeprint paintings on improvised surfaces.

Research Questions

- i. How can shoeprint paintings be created on conventional surfaces like cardboard paper, chipboard, strawboards, and canvas?
- ii. How can shoeprint paintings be created using mixed media?
- iii. In what way can shoeprints found within the environment be identified and appropriated into paintings?
- iv. Which surfaces could be improvised for producing shoeprint paintings?

Justification

The search for diverse sources of inspiration which forms the bedrock for creativity and innovation in the visual arts informs this research. The impressions (shoeprints) are abundant in our environment shoeprints are elements with aesthetic shapes and patterns that are fascinating to visual artists. This research is geared towards raising awareness about their aesthetic presence, not much scholarly attention has been given to the aesthetics inherent in the shoeprints as artistic impressions. The researcher is aware of the care and innovation that is taken by industrial designers in designing and creating shoe soles. Conceptual art has paved the way allowing any object to be appropriated and put in the context of art, importantly too, their ephemeral nature deserves to be documented in painting.

Significance of the Study

Shoeprints comprise shapes and patterns which are basic elements and principles of design, it will help to capture and document the fleeting aesthetics of these shoeprints in our environment. The study can stimulate or inspire further studies by other painters.

Scope

This study revolved around geometric and organic shoeprints found within the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, (Samaru) main campus only. The study was delimited to the three types of shoeprints identified by forensic scientists, which are patent, plastic and latent shoeprints without consideration of gender. These were studied because they served as inspiration for the studio production.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this research was hinged on the philosophy of conceptual art, which

considers the idea of a work as being more important than the product. Two of the proponents of conceptual art are Sol Lewitt (1928-2007) and Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945). The conceptual framework for this study also leaned on the concept of formalism popularized by production. Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) and Clive Bell (1881-1964). Formalism as a movement in art focuses on the elements and principles of design (line, shape, colour, texture, pattern) as the most important value in art; and all other considerations are secondary. However, this study blended the two since an artwork could be both conceptual and aesthetic.

Deduction from the Review of Related Literature and Related Artworks

From the reviewed literature and artworks, it has been established that the Palaeolithic man trekked about barefooted, and that action resulted in the first noticeable impressions called footprints. The observable impressions which marked his territory subsequently emerged to be recognized through native intelligence as a form of design.

To this, Frutiger (1989) asserts that “it can be assumed that the earliest illustrations in human history were footprints in clay and the prints of hands smeared with colouring matter on rock walls”. The literature and related artworks consulted so far reveal that no in-depth study has been done on the intricate shapes and patterns of shoeprints by Nigerian painters. Apart from the forensic scientists who study shoeprints for the primary purpose of tracking criminals in their society. It appears that records of scholarly paintings with a primary focus on the shapes and patterns of shoeprints by Nigerian painters are scarce. Similarly, most of the related reviewed paintings show that, the handprints, footprints and shoeprints paintings have been created for symbolic or decorative purposes only. This research therefore focuses primarily on the shapes and patterns of shoeprints as designs. It is an exclusive focus on the intricate shapes and patterns inherent in the shoeprints.

Methodology

This study is exploratory as such the studio-based approach was adopted. The studio is a place of inquiry, creation and construction of knowledge and understanding. Also, the multi-method approach in which observation, conception, visualization, experimentation and exploration with diverse materials and processes were involved reflectively. Candy (2006) expresses that practice-based research such as this is geared towards the advancement of knowledge and understanding. This includes the invention of ideas, images, performances and designs leading to new or

improved insights which could be contextualized as creative works. It is important to state that this study is qualitative, naturalistic and reflective. The stamp printing technique was employed in the production process and most of the designs revolved around the two major shapes and patterns of shoeprints, which are geometric and organic by orientation.

Data Collection

The data for this study was chiefly primary. This was collected through direct observation, sketching, and photographic recording of shoeprints on several surfaces. Instruments for the study included observation, and photography, while tools for the research were the camera, flash drive, laptop, and sketch pad.

Observation and Photograph

Shoeprints were observed at different locations within the Ahmadu Bello University, Samaru campus and were photographed but for the purpose of this paper, only an image would be presented below.



Fig. 1: Image of Patent shoeprints in the night at Iccsa/Ramat Hall, (ABU, Main Campus)
Photograph: Abafra Gurin Abednego (2021)

Materials

The materials used in this study were mainly shoe soles possessing different designs in terms of shapes and patterns. These shoes and shoe soles were bought from Samaru and Sabo markets in Zaria town of Kaduna State, while others were sourced from friends and those found within the environment. Both conventional and unconventional materials were used such as acrylic watercolour, oil colour, enamel, tiles, cement, plaster of Paris, clay, mud, sand, coloured chalk, glass, cardboard paper, chipboard, and canvas among others.

After the collection of a variety of shoes and shoe soles, the stamping technique was applied in the production of shoeprint paintings. Colour or paint (acrylic, watercolour, oil colour, enamel was applied with brush on the raised portions of shoe soles and stamp-printed on any chosen surface).



Fig. 2: Mixed Media technique in the studio, photograph, Adesanya Clement, 2022.



Fig.3: Mixed Media Process for the production of Organic shoeprint painting, photograph, Abafras Abednego, 2022.

Results

The following are the variety of shoeprint paintings produced during the study:

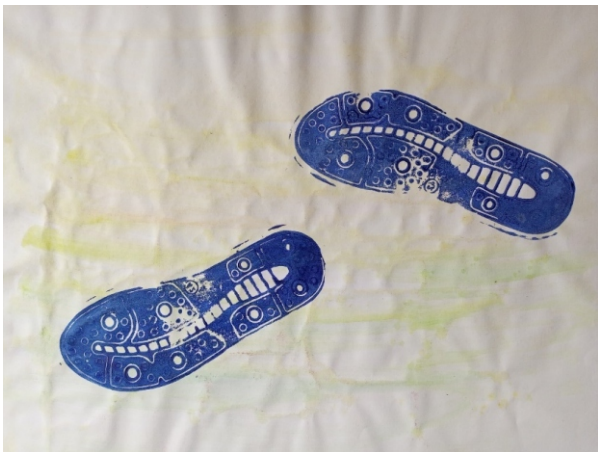


Fig.4: SPINE 1, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Poster colour on paper, 51x61cm

The painting titled “Spine 1” shown in Fig.4 reveals a conceptual expression of two identical shoeprints stamped on white cardboard paper. The identical shoeprints are executed in a deliberately measured distance as suggested by their closeness, which is indicative of a gentle stride. Their colour is a monochrome of blue and they tend to simulate

movement. The title “Spine 1” is suggested because the geometric shapes and patterns are circles around the outlines (edges) of the well-defined shoeprints, while within the shapes, there appears a trail of rectangles which at some point transforms into squares from top to bottom. The process employed for the creation of this painting involved the technique of applying acrylic on the sole of the shoe and stamping the sole on white cardboard paper. This was the stage of experimentation and exploration geared toward establishing the suitability of both the improvised tool (shoe sole) and the surface(cardboard paper) upon which the prints were to be generated.



Fig. 5: CLOUD 1, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Acrylic on Straw board, 30x25cm

Cloud 1 in Fig. 5 is an experimental shoeprint painting executed with acrylic colours on a strawboard in the researcher's attempt to identify shoeprints considered suitable for painting explorations. The strawboard was chosen as a different surface from the cardboard paper previously used. This was chosen because of its thickness and rough surface texture. A stamping technique was deployed to generate the impressions. The dominant colours of purple, blue, yellow, and pink were utilized to create a cloudlike background, while the geometric shoeprints in white appear to be floating within the activated space. The geometric shapes of triangles, squares and faint circles are stylized and appear to recoil forming what looks like Figure eight. The researcher discovered that the strawboard was a good surface for the creation of shoeprint impressions owing to its surface texture which is suitable for image retention. The three shoeprints are made up of stylised geometric shapes and patterns that appear in an ascending orientation within the work. They appear to suggest a lifting or

levitation from the lower left corner of the painting through the middle to the top of the painting. Background colours were created by the researcher's brushwork



Fig.6: *Flower 1*, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Acrylic on Cardboard, 51x61cm.

Flower 1 presented is a painting composition that appears like the designs on wrappers (textile products). Another shoe sole with a floral design was used in this exploration. It has the shapes and patterns obtained from a female shoeprint. The shapes and patterns are juxtaposed in a manner which suggests their oscillation around a negative white space in the middle like a nucleus. The shapes and patterns of the shoeprints are made up of delicate lines which are curvilinear. Dominant colours in the composition are dark-brown, red, yellow, and red against a dark background. The cardboard paper was initially plain white, but the researcher intuitively painted some portions with black colour leaving the centre white. After that initial process, the chosen shoe sole was painted with yellow, red, and black colours, and stamped on the surface at intervals. This process resulted in the achievement of contrast between the bright and dark colours.



Fig.7: *Leaf*, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Water Colour on Cardboard, 51x61cm

This work titled *Leaf* shown in Fig.7 is another unique shoeprint painting experiment. Exploration was conducted in this painting using only the frontal portion of the shoe sole which appears like leaf motif (organic). Delicate lines made up of small squares and dots in close formation (patterns) could be seen fanning out but enclosed within the oval shapes in the compositions. The experiment was done with hues of blue, red and brown colours on a white background. The stamping technique was deployed in the production of the design devoid of sophistication.



Fig.8: *Structure 1*, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Acrylic on Chipboard, 125x93cm

Structure 1 shown in Fig. 8 was the first work in the development of the structure series. After exploring the “Structure series” on cardboard paper, further exploration was carried out with the same shoe sole on chipboard. The result of the imprint was the same topographic aerial view in rich primary colours of red, blue, and yellow acrylic colours. The painting reveals the same geometric structures of varying shapes and patterns of squares and rectangles. Negative spaces appear as white, thereby creating the much-needed contrast which enlivens the composition. The painting composition showcases the result achieved with the shoe sole that was used in the previous preliminary exploration of the Structure series. The arrangement of the shapes and patterns of varying rectangles and squares did not follow any particular order. Fundamentally, this shoeprint is an abstract conceptual expression of positive and negative spaces.



Fig. 9: Circles, Abafras Abednego, 2021, Mixed Media, 150x120cm

Circles portrayed in Fig. 9, is a mixed media composition of geometric shapes and patterns of shoeprints. Acrylic and enamel paints were restrictively used in the creation of this painting. The background colours are analogous to yellow, orange, brown, umber and red achieved with the brush. The background colours fuse in a cloud-like formation. Within the basic outlines of the shoeprints are intricate shapes and patterns of varying sizes of circles, spreading out in diverse directions. The imprints were achieved in black and white enamel colours against a predominantly acrylic background. A stamping technique was utilised. Part of the original idea was to create less colourful shoeprints with voids that would allow the rich background colours to fill up the open spaces. The black shoeprints stand out, while the white shoeprints appear to blend with the background colours.

This aesthetic mixed media painting (Fig. 10) is the product of intuitive creative expression, and exploration using a variety of media (plaster of Paris, sand, pebbles, fibre, top bond, acrylic, and enamel paint on canvas) in the studio setting. The impulse to simulate shoeprints in the mud, such as seen in a previous plate led to the creation of this painting. The objective was to utilise canvas to achieve shoeprint painting in low relief. Two shoeprints which formed the subject for the painting titled *Steps* were utilised in this painting. The shoeprints are made close together and appear to be

floating like an island out in the sea. Organic shapes and patterns made up of wavy and zigzag lines decorate the shoeprints in white and yellow-green colours. Most of the grain of sand blended with tiny pebbles retain their natural colours in shades of brown around the shoeprints. What appears like a crater could be seen towards the top of the canvas. Conspicuous patterns of blue, white, and yellow colours blend and float around the shoeprints in sea-like waves.

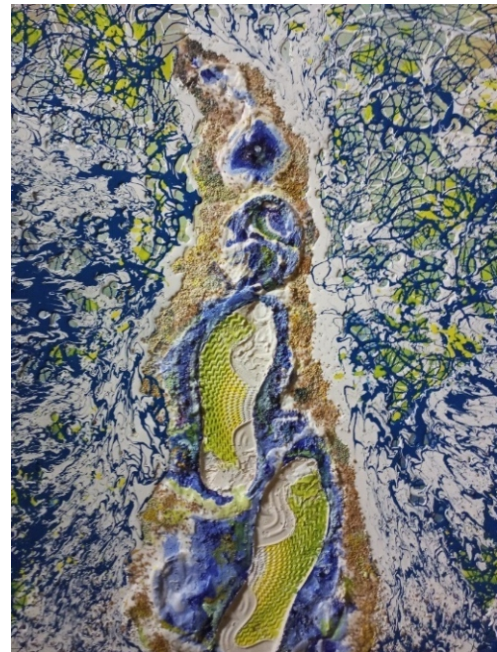


Fig. 10: Plastic, Abafras Abednego, 2022, Mixed Media, 122x92cm



Fig. 11: *Ephemeral 1*, Abafras Abednego, 2022, Mixed Media, 132x79cm

Ephemeral 1 shown in Fig.11 is the first in the series. The media and materials for this painting were improvised to create ephemeral artworks to be viewed momentarily. The stamping method was also deployed in the creative process. A wooden board was constructed to serve the purpose of canvas in this creative endeavour. White cement powder was sourced and poured on the flat wooden board, and it served as the soft mud upon which plastic shoeprints were to be created. Coloured chalk, specifically, yellow and blue was ground and applied using the splash technique; while the organic shoeprints sank into the powder to create the effects of low relief. Four shoeprints are visible in the work. The ephemeral painting mimics a walk in the mud. To be observed also is the design of an arch shape both on the fore and hind parts of each shoeprint. The arch shape in the frontal portion of the shoeprint has intricate floral designs, fanning out like a sunflower. It appears that the arch design in the frontal portion of the shoeprint can be completed as a perfect circle if brought together.



Fig. 12: Ephemeral 2: Abafras Abednego, 2022, Mixed Media, 132x79cm

Ephemeral 2 reveals a juxtaposition of organic and geometric shapes and patterns made of intricate floral motifs which are at some point of intersection overlapped by the stylized geometric shapes and patterns of what looks like polygons and circles. This simulates the aesthetic impressions that are the result of what is regarded as an accident and design in the human environment. It is however noticeable that the geometric shoeprints have no particular bearing, thereby creating the type of textural relief impressions one sees as people move (trek) back and forth along footpaths or in the public space. The

colours remain yellow and blue with white, sourced from grounded-coloured chalk and white cement powder. The stamping technique was used during this production just the way it was utilised in Ephemeral 1.

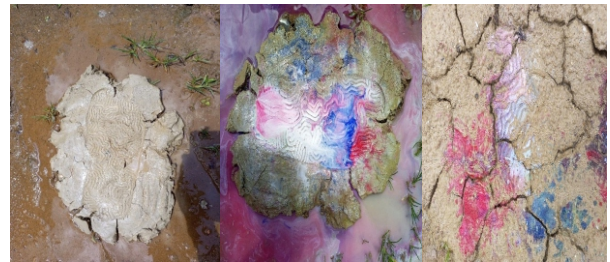


Fig. 13: Ephemeral 4 A, B, & C, Abafras Abednego, 2022, Variable

Ephemeral 4 A, B, and C presented in Fig.13 is a series of outdoor explorations of ephemeral shoeprint painting. This is a painting that is improvisational and meant to be impacted or shaped by weather. The approach to this artwork was dictated by intuition and careful observation of environmental elements with the potential for creative manipulation, which could suit the objective. The traditional canvas as well as the restrictive studio space were abandoned for the outdoors where the environment was more inviting and stimulating.

The researcher shaped a lump of clay which served as the improvised surface for this novel artwork. The piece of clay was propped within a water-logged depression outside the studio. A bold shoeprint with organic shapes and patterns of texturally twisting swirls was imprinted on the piece of clay. Acrylic colours of red and blue with white were splashed on the piece of artwork; the colours were allowed to freely flow and blend themselves in a rapidly turbulent manner. The flow created rapidly changing aesthetics in the patterns of colours that were a beauty to behold in split seconds which was documented in photographs and video. The surrounding surface area assumed the status of a natural canvas, having every inch of the ground activated and inundated by colours. The artwork is documented to capture the transition and the ephemeralness of the shoeprints on this chosen surface to exhibit the fading impressions in stages, from colourful and animated bold and clear impressions of the shoeprint on the lump of clay, through the stages of depreciation on the second and third plates. At the final stage, the shoeprints depreciated radically, leaving only traces of the impressions.

This phenomenon buttresses the fact that, what is beautiful today, will depreciate tomorrow. The British ephemeral artist Bullen-Ryner also

expresses herself using this style and technique. Bullen-Ryner uses the earth as the chief medium for her ephemeral artworks, which are usually the depiction of animals like birds, monkeys, and squirrels among others. Normally, these paintings are done on the ground with petals from flowers, twigs, coloured sand, and stones, and they are allowed to vanish with time.



Fig. 14: Ephemeral 5, Abafras Abednego, 2022, Variable

This painting titled Ephemeral 5 presented in (Fig.14) was generated as a result of accident and design within the studio area. Abstract ephemeral painting has been created by these geometric shapes and patterns of shoeprints found on this fungi-invested cement floor outside the studio. This was another radical departure from the conventional painting. Uduak (2016) affirms that the physical orientation and material quality of an object make it a painting. Importantly too, Marcel Duchamp and other conceptual artists encourage appropriation and improvisation which this artwork represents. Hospers (2021) narrates that, “20th Century artists declared that 'found objects' are works of art, since the artist's perception of them as such makes them so, even if the objects were not human-made, and were not modified in any way (except by exhibition) from the natural state.” Hospers adds that every change that human activity has wrought upon the face of nature is art, be it good or bad, beautiful, or ugly, beneficial or destructive.

The non-figurative shoeprints are almost overlapping in composition. The lower shoeprint

has geometric shapes and patterns of rigid rectangles in a zigzag formation running through the length of the shoeprint. Neatly arranged grids of squares characterize the second shoeprints. The shapes and patterns of even squares are more revealing in some portions of the artwork, due to the colouration of the old floor as well as the fading of some shapes. The shoeprints appear in white-grey, while the stained old cement floor is in the colour range of dark-brown, damp dark green and traces of yellow-green.



Fig.15: Surface 1, Abafras Abednego, 2022, Acrylic on simulated marble board, 62x123cm

Surface 1 shown in Fig.15 is another conceptual shoeprint painting on an unconventional surface. A board of simulated marble surface was bought from a building materials shop in Samaru, Zaria; and its conventional use for decoration on the walls of buildings was changed, because the researcher conceptually put it to a new use by converting it into a surface for creating shoeprints. Marcel Duchamp in 1917 purchased a urinal from a shop, which he presented as sculpture. In conceptual art, any object can be appropriated to express an idea. The process involved lying the board flat on the ground before stamping the soles of the shoes on the surface to generate latent prints. The choice of this surface with patterns of gray and white on the surface was deliberate. These gray and white patterns helped to reduce the visibility of the latent shoeprints which were also imprinted in white acrylic. Latency of the impressions was enhanced by the white of the acrylic and the background grey and white patterns on the simulated marble board. These latent organic shoeprints were imprinted on a simulated marble surface covered with sawdust. The five white latent shoeprints could be seen on this surface in receding order. The shoeprints closer to the foreground

appear more conspicuous, but only traces of the imprints could be gleaned at the top or toward the other end of the work. This was executed to capture the fading of the prints as well as the phenomenal issue of transition. Colour of the surface which is largely made up of grays help to conceal the shoeprints, necessitating active observation on the part of the viewer. Observers are thus, compelled to spend more time scrutinizing the work for details of the organic shoeprints. People spend more time before an artwork with fewer details trying to find more details.



Fig.16 : Surface 2 A and B, Abafra Abednego, 2022, 50x23cm

Surface 2 A and B above are another conceptual shoeprint painting on an unconventional surface. This shoeprint painting conveys three organic shoeprints suggesting locomotion. The white shoeprints are bold and clear, comprising shapes and patterns of swirling and twisting loops. The shoeprints are white. The surface on which the shoeprints are imprinted is made up of two large slabs of industrial tile joined together to create the effect of a long panel. Black with meandering streaks of white characterize the surface. Harmony and balance are achieved with the luminous white of the shoeprints and the streaks of white on the surface. Tile is one of the surfaces people walk on with their shoes. Whenever shoes pick up dirt and create shoeprints on tiles within the environment, they are most times regarded as eyesores or stains; and are quickly cleaned up without a moment to appreciate their aesthetics. The twisting and meandering lines tend to suggest the many twists of fate or fortune of life. This improvised surface is one of the industrial articles appropriated for the conceptual expression of the shapes and patterns of shoeprints as design.



Fig. 17: Surface 4, Abafra Abednego, 2022, Shoe print on wet cement, 77x63cm

Surface 4 shown in Fig.17 is the result of the exploration of unconventional surfaces for the production of shoeprint painting. Rarely do people see shoeprints on concrete because they are hard surfaces. Thus, the researcher set out to explore how to conceptually produce shoeprints on concrete that will stand as art. The researcher was guided during the processes for the production of the concrete surface by two sculptors. Materials for this exploration included some quantity of cement, a wooden board as support, and iron mesh to hold the cement in place with some nails. The technical assistants prepared the surface while the process was photographed by the researcher as shown in Fig.17.

The cement was mixed with water and poured on the mesh which was stuck to the board and reinforced with nails to keep the cement attached to the board. After allowing the cement to set for some minutes, the shoeprints were created before the surface could harden because the cement in its semi-wet state is the best time and condition for generating the impressions. When completely hardened, hardly will any impression be created because it will be lacking in malleability.

The painting therefore displays an improvised surface (wet cement) upon which two shoeprints with geometric shapes and patterns were executed. The shoeprints comprise stylized triangles composed side by side with varying shapes and patterns of squares around the fore portion of the shoeprints; while the hind portion of the shoeprints

reveals equally, varying sizes of rectangles. The overall shape looks like Figure Eight or groundnut shape. White and yellow acrylic were splashed on the designs, accentuating some of the shapes and patterns as well as the surrounding space. The two shoeprints are astride each other. Evidence of this type of plastic shoeprints exists in the environment, but not much attention is paid to the aesthetics of these elements as art. These impressions occur on wet cement or plaster, and most times, they are the results of accident not design. Gani Odutokun's accident and design philosophy buttresses this assertion. Some designs (like the shoeprints) evolve by chance while others are brought about intentionally (Ikpakronyi and Jari, 2007).



Fig18: Surface 5, Abafra Abednego, 2022, shoeprints on plaster of Paris 77x64cm

The search for improvised surfaces led to the production of four single-leg shoeprints that are both organic and geometric in shapes and patterns with the plaster of Paris shown in Fig.18. The materials and medium used in this conceptual exploration of shoeprint are plaster of Paris, water, fibre, and acrylic. Part of the idea for this study was the desire to find possible ways to create shoeprints in three-dimensional (relief) on unconventional surfaces to simulate the impression in the mud. The researcher was guided on how to proceed with the exploration by sculptors. Some quantity of water was obtained in a bucket, a polythene sheet was spread on the floor. Measurement was taken of the space within the frame for the actual work. The powder of plaster of Paris was poured into the measured quantity of water and stirred to a

consistency. The mixture was quickly poured into the space within the frame, and the chosen shoe holes were briskly dipped into a container of detergent water which acted as a separator. The acrylic colour was immediately splashed on the surface. Thereafter, the shoe soles were stamped on the fresh cement before it hardened. After about 30 minutes, the shoes were removed to reveal the impressions created. The impressions sank into the medium as low relief, simulating shoeprints in the mud; while the pressure exacted by the sinking shoeprints also created a range of contours.

The shoeprints are a combination of baby and adult shoeprints cutting across gender. They seem to suggest some form of family bonding. On the topmost left corner of the work is an adult shoeprint which shapes and patterns are composed of grid lines. The one by the top right corner possesses bold zigzag lines that appear either as W or climbing Lizard in shape and pattern. The next adult shoeprint in that clockwise direction also on the right corner, showcases diagonal lines; this is closely followed by a baby's shoeprint that is organic in design. The colours are a splash of yellow, blue, and red, with black against a generally white background.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that not many artists (painters) have paid particular attention to the intricate designs (shapes and patterns) inherent in the shoeprints which are created daily as people trek about. The study can raise awareness about the beauty of these intricate shapes and patterns, thereby leading to a rekindling of interest in the fundamentals of these aesthetic shapes and patterns. These shapes and patterns are the building blocks in any meaningful artistic composition. Many surfaces (both conventional and unconventional) are suitable for producing shoeprint paintings.

The study also demonstrates the fact that shoeprints found within the environment could be successfully appropriated and put in the context of painting. It was also discovered that, by juxtaposing the impressions created with other environmental elements in a mixed-media format, a heightened sense of aesthetic appreciation was achieved. A fundamental discovery from this study too, is that the fleeting aesthetic of the shoeprints could be captured and documented in painting. Conceptual art encourages a review of the way in which artworks are perceived and created. Any object can qualify as an artwork. The study encourages improvisation, appreciation and creativity in artistic production.

Conclusion

Generally, conceptual art creates avenue for artists to fully express themselves by giving vent to their ideas, sometimes in the most unusual ways (provoking thoughts). This study was embarked upon to conceptually elevate and deliberately put the ordinary impressions called shoeprints into the context of art. This is directly connected to the aesthetic qualities which shoeprints possess in terms of shapes and patterns as basic elements and principles of design. These basic shapes and patterns are either organic or geometric in design. They may be curvilinear, rectilinear, amorphous, or biomorphic. These fascinating impressions created on variety of surfaces as people wear shoes and trek about, should not be passed without notice; especially by artists who are trained to keenly observe their environment for inspiration.

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