



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF TWO BONE ART SCULPTORS: HIDEKI TOKUSHIGE AND OSIBOYE OLUWASEUN OPEYEMI

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Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to make a comparative analysis of the bone sculptural artworks of Hideki Tokushige and Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi. The identified bone artworks that were analysed for Hideki Tokushige are **Madonna Lily** and **Chinese Lantern Plant**, while that of Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi are **Grazing** and **Scapula Xylophone** respectively. One of the objectives of the paper is to identify the types of animal bones the artists engage with, also identifying the differences and similarities between the bone sculptural artworks of the two artists. Observational and Survey method of research design are employed, while data was analyzed through descriptive method, in other to achieve the aim and objectives of the paper. The brief paper was therefore concluded with their similarities and differences which were deduce from their medium of expression, visual conceptualization, methods of preservation and review of literature.*

Keywords: *Hideki Tokushige, Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi and Bone*

Introduction

Contemporary art practices came into being with different medium of expression in art. Medium of expression in sculpture are no longer restricted, it depends on the experimental cum creative ability of the sculptor. Ononeme (2010), states that, “there are abundant expressive materials in our environment looking for the attention of artist to use them”. He also define the source of the medium by saying that, some of these potential artistic media were divinely located through the providence of God in their natural habitat while others have been used by man for various purposes and later abandoned thereby constituting nuisance in the environment. It is in view of this that Gushem (2005), refers simply to materials that society considered as waste, that are put aside; thrown away as not good enough to be kept and also the material that artist have globally refused to accept as conventional media. Osiboye (2017) in addendum states that in sculpture, these materials in most cases are either scavenge around the environment or bought cheaply from the collectors. Also the artist might seek for the service of a labourer to assist in the collection of the material while he will make the payment. Adeyemo

and Duniya (2016) define contemporary sculpture as an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects, and could be in the round (free standing), in relief on surfaces, or in environments ranging from tableaus to contexts that envelope the spectator. The paper therefore is an attempt to analyze by comparing the use of bone, a contemporary medium of expression of two contemporary artists.

The paper will therefore suggest the type of animal bone, differences and similarities of the two bone artists selected and two of their bone artworks respectively; through observational and survey method of data collection, while data was analyzed through descriptive method. The artists are **Hideki Tokushige** and **Osiboye Oluwaseun**, while the artworks selected are **Madona Lilly** and **Chinese lantern plant** for Hideki while Osiboye artworks are **Grazing** and **Scapula Xylophone**

Hideki Tokushige

Hideki Tokushige is an artist. His works has been featured in several exhibitions at key galleries and museums, including the [Gallery Kogure, Tokyo](#) and the [Gallery Kogure, New York](#) MutualArt, (n.d). According to the Artling (n.d), Hideki Tokushige was born in Kagoshima, Japan in 1974. In 1997, he graduated from the Nippon Photography Institute in Tokyo, from the Department of Documentary Photography. It was also stated that, in 2008, he started his signature practice of Honebana (Bone Flower) after finding a raccoon dead on the road. He has lived in Tokyo since 2013. In 2011, he was awarded the Young Artists of Japan Vol.4 Grand Prix. He has had two solo exhibitions, in 2013 and 2015 respectively, held at Lower Akihabara in Tokyo. The Artling (n.d.) also confirmed too that, he has participated in various group exhibitions in Taipei, Paris, Brussels, New York and throughout Japan.



Fig.1: Artist Works, (2018). (YouTube Screen shot) “Honebana_Making of Madonna Lily” HidekiTokushige. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/mPWVF_6iEcc August 31, 2019

Sarah (2013) defines art as something that can be made out of almost anything in reference to Hideki Tokushige. He embraces the concept literally by constructing beautiful pieces out of animal bone. He explained further that, Tokushige's art is only made out of the bone from discarded animals; he doesn't kill anything in order to receive more material. Jaymi (2013) notified that, Sculptor Hideki Tokushige purchases rats and mice from pet shops in frozen batches that are normally used to feed reptiles. He will then defrosts the small creatures and cuts away the flesh until he has collected hundreds of miniscule bones.

While Sarah (2013) specifies that, once Tokushige has the bones, he creates stunning and intricate flowers. After he takes pictures of, or displays his amazing work, he then breaks the bones back down and puts them out to be composted.



Fig.2: Artist Works, (2018). (YouTube Screen shot) “Honebana_Making of Madonna Lily” HidekiTokushige. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/mPWVF_6iEcc August 31, 2019

From the above view (**Fig.2**) which suggests the artist at work while making Madona Lily, observing the tinning bones that he is working with, which demands for the use of forceps in other to pick and put the tinny bones together. Also still on (**Fig.2**) above, critical look of the graphically ruled green table or mat, where the tiny bones are carefully arranged first, guided by the graphically ruled green table or mat, before it will be picked up by the artist to create an intension. Jaymi (2013) the beautiful yet gruesome flowers are then made by gluing each tiny fragment together until they resemble a recognizable bloom. It implies that there is no guess work in his length and sizes of the bones of such that suggest great dexterity and struggle towards perfection. This graphical measures have been taken probably in other to get the grains of the leaves of the flowers well arrange in the descending and ascending order.



Fig.3: Artist Works, (2018). (YouTube Screen shot) “Honebana_Making of Madona Lily” HidekiTokushige. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/mPWVF_6iEcc August 31, 2019

Observing the full made Madona Lily in comparison to Sarah (2013) statement which states that, “Once Tokushige has the bones; he creates stunning and intricate flowers. After he takes pictures of, or displays his amazing work, he then breaks the bones back down and puts them out to be composted. Which was also acknowledge by Jaymi (2013) that, he displays the delicate bone structures at exhibitions for a limited period of time before breaking them up and burying them in the ground. One could find a reason why Hideki Tokushige always snaps his

work and returns the bone outside to be composted. Actually the flora artworks looks fragile which could determine its longevity so it is best documented through picture. Jaymi (2013) acknowledges that, these stunning flowers might look like they have been created using lace or delicately cut from paper but they are actually made from the skeletons of dead animals. Jaymi (2013) informed that a flower is made from around 100 mice bones and sometimes it takes more than a month to dissect one rodent and also added that, he has made 11 kinds of flower like lotus, spider lily, dandelion, and hydrangea."



Fig.4: Chinese Lantern Plant (2015). Dimensions: 33.6cm (H) x 26.8cm (W) / 13.2"(H) x 10.6"(W). Retrieved from https://ik.imagekit.io/theartling/p/artworks/image-iUyhF6i.jpg?tr=c-at_max,w-2000,h-2000 August 2, 2019

The floral Chinese lantern plant bone artwork is characterized with three different kinds of texture. The leaf surface texture, which suggest the fur of a cat; the texture of the stem that looks like a vertebra column (backbone); the two seeds of the plant, that actually hang like a lantern is also observed to be having another

surface texture defined by different forms of tiny lines as in the case of Madona Lily and the black background that gives an impression of night time. The above composition creates the imagination of a white cat at night carrying a lantern with a careful movement. This movement can be interpreted from the stem looking like a vertebra column. The movement also suggests the hunting skill of a cat in other not to alert its prey. Therefore researcher implied the title of the work to be "Hunting Escapade".

Probably due to the surface finishing or pictorial effects, the art piece looks more of plastic than bone but in contrary, Jaymi (2013) stated that, "I often bring up the image of a flower from the bone's shape, I never whittle and manufacture bones

and I just use the natural characteristics of the bone". He further stated that, he only use real bones, fur skin, and glue, because all the stuff will be returned to the earth. Bone flowers are pulled apart and put in the ground after shooting. It was also informed that he makes flowers by changing various combinations of bones.

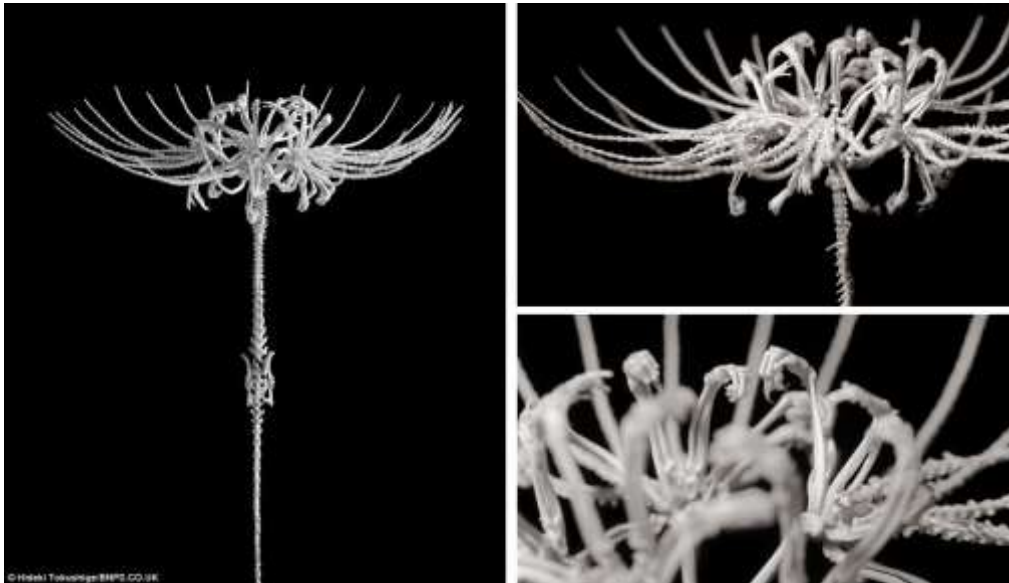


Fig.5: The Cabal of Bone Flower (2015) Retrieved from http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-eZMf-RkS0_c/UdEhhvySg8I/AAAAAAAAAjyU/gNHHNxG2wUo/s1600/03.jpg September 2, 2019

The piece of artwork is suggested to be like an umbrella with the upper part of the umbrella turn upwards to contain the cabals. They are particularly suggested by the forelimbs bone of a rat, which are created in different unique movements that suggest dialogue. From a Marxist point of view their placement at the top of the umbrella suggests social stratification and classification of the elites in the society, which suggest inequality before the law. The Cabal could suggest a political group of people that controls the finance, rule of law; they determine the leadership personnel and leadership style of the society. It is worthy of note that the Cabal could determine the progress of the society through their strong influence on the society. Also it could be likened to a secret society whose political influential activities are not known to the entire society.

Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi

Osiboye Oluwaseun Opeyemi was born in Ososa, Ogun state. His late parents are from Ogun state, Nigeria. Osiboye was enrolled at Adeola Odutola Elementary

School, Ijebu-Ode for his primary education from 1987 to 1989, Mayflower Junior School and Mayflower Secondary School, Ikenne from 1990 to 1992 and 1993 to 1997 respectively, Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, Ijebu-Ode from 1998 to 2000, all in Ogun State for his secondary education. He is a graduate of Sculpture from Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo with B. A. ED. Fine and Applied Arts. Osiboye had his second degree in M. A. Art History in Fine Arts in 2016 at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and presently a post-graduate student at department of Fine and Applied Arts University of Benin, Edo state. He had his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at Kano State Polytechnic, Kano between 2006 and 2007.

He taught briefly on a part-time basis at Federal College of Education, Kano from 2007 to 2008. Osiboye later joined the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Federal College of Education (Technical) Bichi, Kano state in 2008 where he is an art teacher till date. He has to his credit, publications in reputable journals and has equally attended conferences. He has participated in three joint exhibitions and one solo exhibition



Scapula Xylophone

In the course of the literature review, it was reviewed that Bruce Mahalski another bone sculptor was noted to have produced a bone guitar (a musical instrument) in cooperation with a guitar maker.

Fig.6 Artist: Bruce Mahalski

Title: The Bone Guitar

Medium: Bones

Year: 2013

Source: <http://www.mahalski.org/archives/820#!prettyPhoto30>, 2019

According to Bruce Mahalski (2013), [YouTube], “The first bone guitar is a collaboration between textural bone artist—Bruce Mahalski and guitar

maker David Gilberd of Goldbeard Guitars. Perhaps Osiboye Oluwaseun took inspiration from that producing a musical instrument too called Xylophone. The xylophone was made with treated eight shoulder blades (scapulas) of cow. A

xylophone is a musical instrument sometimes made up of eight different sounds as the musical notes suggest do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do.



Fig. 9:

Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun
Title: Scapula Xylophone
Medium: Cow Bones, Metals, Grog, Ash and Copper wire
Dimensions: 2ft by 4ft
Year: 2019
Photograph by: Osiboye Oluwaseun

As it is observed the xylophone composed of eight scapula bones of a cow and two drumming stick made with bone head and metal rod crossing each other below the eight scapula bones that represent the eight musical notes. The piece of artwork also appears like a smiling dentition because it was perceived as the frontal upper dentition of man which consists of four incisors' Therefore it could be implied as a smile to the music of the scapula xylophone been played.

The colours are product of ash, they are observed as the background of the high relief mixed media artwork. They appear in squares and vertical/ horizontal rectangles, the edges of the shapes were stitched together with metal copper wire to become one. This is to achieve the impression of one background despite the differences in shapes and colours involved, thus suggesting rhythm and harmony on the background. The patches of different colours and varying sizes came to conformity of a basic and definite shape which is rectangle

Grazing

On contrary to the above analysed, this bonny work of art is an exploration of the two neutral colours black and white. The four feet by eight feet piece of artwork titled grazing was brought to light through the manipulative exploration of contrasting colours, which are black and white.



Fig.10: The making of Grazing
Photograph by: Onyekachukwu Iloanya
Date: 2018

The composition of the artwork brings forth a central figure with two big horns fastened to it with binding wire; the central form is suggested by a life treated cow skull engraved upon with lines and holes on the skull. Attached to the horns is a chain made of bone rings and metals rings, to add beauty and elegance to skull. The central figure is a form that suggest the pride of leadership or joy of been a shepherd.

or joy of been a shepherd.



Fig.11: The making of Grazing Continue
Photograph by: Onyekachukwu Iloanya
Date: 2018

At the background some other stylized, flat cow heads are depicted faintly. They are made with flat bone rings. In comparison with the earlier described elegant cow skull, this suggests a socio political classification in the modern society. A situation whereby

the life of the political leaders is better than that of the people they are meant to serve or that vote them into power.



Fig.12

Artist: Osiboye Oluwaseun

Title: Grazing

Medium: Bones (cow and camel) and Metals

Size: 4ft by 8ft

Date: 2018

Photograph by: Osiboye Oluwaseun

The background of the work above is largely dominated with treated bone rings that was carefully cut and pasted on board depicting a gracious or vegetative environment for herd of cow to feed. This could be implied as the abundant natural resources of the society that has not been managed properly by the societal leaders, probably as a result of corruption, nepotism, tribalism, mismanagement and misappropriation.

Conclusion

One of the first point of call on their differences and similarities is that the two artist works on the bones of animals with similar nature. For instance Hideki makes use of both rat and mice bones which can classified as rodents. While Osiboye makes use of camel and cow bones which is been classified as ruminants, apart from the classification of the animals both too have similar forms and sizes. That

is rat and mice have similar forms and sizes also, cow and camel too have similar forms and sizes. It is imply so as to have genuine continuity in the availability of materials (bone) to work. Even though, Hideki and Osiboye work with animal bones but in some different and unique ways. For instance it was reported that Hideki retrieved his bones from frozen rats and mice bought from pet shops, while Osiboye make use of camel and cow bones retrieved from abattoir. Hideki visual conceptualization centre's on flora design while that of Osiboye could be suggested not to be fixed. Also Osiboye visual concept involves the use of different medium and techniques that is mix media and also colour around or on the bones. According to Stephanie (2019), "Mixed media techniques are those that combine different methods and mediums to make artwork." Not the combination of two different medium alone, it involves both the combination of two or more different medium as well as the combination of two or more different methods of making an artwork. Tate (2010) has it that, "the use of mix media began around 1912 with the cubist collages and construction of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque and has become widespread as artist developed increasingly open attitudes to the media of art." Hideki maintain and retain the natural colour of its animal's bones on his flora artworks.

It was mentioned as well that Hideki keeps its artworks pictorially while he buries the original artwork establishing that the ecosystem is uninterrupted. Unlike Osiboye the original works are preserved and kept in door for longetevity to be achieved. Also it is believe this study will serve as a source of document to scholars and inspire other artist and art critics alike.

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