

# Indigenous Tendencies: An Interpretation and Classification of Some of the Works of Bruce Onobrakpeya

by

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## Abstract

This study attempts to interpret and further classify some of the works of Nigerian printmaker, painter and sculptor Bruce Obomeyoma Onobrakpeya that has become pertinent via a classification based on five major styles which derives from the treatment of human forms derived largely from iconographic, psychoanalytic and other interpretational approaches. The presentation also attests to the continuous indigenous forms noticeable in Nigerian art in the twenty first century, and therefore it attempts to compartmentalize the pieces in order to enhance the understanding of the artist, and his works.

**Keywords:** iconographic, psychoanalytic, interpretation, classification approaches, styles.

## Introduction

The name “Bruce Onobrakpeya” is not new in scholastic studies in Nigeria and the world in general. In fact, scholars have continued to write about his relentless efforts at forging the synthesis between his tradition, personal experiences and modern experiments. These mixtures have resulted in a cross fertilization of forms which portray a variety of unique styles. Despite his creative ingenuity, not much in terms of developing the indigenous interpretation of the content of his works has been fully conducted. Thus, it must be noted that some of his works are not simply aesthetic decorations or indigenous combinations; they are visual codes which many artists and art lovers may find difficult to comprehend. It is this historical lacuna that motivated this researcher to embark on an interpretational analysis of some of Onobrakpeya’s works. This work also attempts to dispute the view of Willett (1971) that although Onobrakpeya’s work is often African in subject, it is not African in style.

It must be noted that Onobrakpeya transcends the usual, as an artist of intense significance who fuses indigenous elements into his works over time. Besides these indigenous properties, elements of his biography as well as taste form an important part of his work. Thus, the methods used to interpret his works are iconographic and psychoanalytical in nature and other interpretational approaches are also systematically fused into this study.

Iconography involves an understanding and interpretation of the subject matter (Arnold, 2004). Arnold (2004) describes iconography as an important method of understanding the meaning of art. It emphasizes content over form (Adams, 2001). Adams (1996) sees iconography as a way of how an artist writes the image and the way the image writes itself. It encompasses the study and interpretation of figural representations which could either be individual, symbolic, religious or secular (Arnold, 2004).

Psychoanalysis on the other hand, is a method that separates the art from the maker (Arnold, 2004). One significant element of psychoanalysis is that it attempts to construct social and sexual identities visually; second, it attempts to reconstruct the past and interprets the relevance of the past to the present, and third, it signifies the transformation of work and talent through instinctual energies into aesthetic form (Adams, 2001).

## **Bruce Onobrakpeya**

Bruce Obomeyoma Onobrakpeya (b. 1932) hails from Agbarah-otor in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta state of Nigeria (Agbarah-otor, 2002). He is described as a teacher, scholar, book illustrator, author, innovator, printer, and most of all, the pride of Nigeria (Agbarah-otor, 2002). He did his primary and secondary education in Benin and Sapele in the former Bendel state, now Edo and Delta states in Nigeria. In 1961, he obtained a Diploma in fine art from Nigerian college of Arts, Science and Technology Zaria now Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) (Agbarah-otor, 2002). Dale (1998) opines that in the following year, Onobrakpeya passed the post graduate teachers certificate examination.

He taught in Western Boys High School, Benin Ondo Boys High School Ondo and in 1963 at St. Gregory's College Lagos (Agbarah-otor, 2001 Dale 1998). He had also been artist in residence in Hay-stack Mountain School of Art and craft in the state of Maine in the U.S.A (1975), Elizabeth city State University in North Carolina (1979) and at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan in 1984 (Dale, 1998:184).

He is a recipient of several international and national awards such as: the British Council Award (1969), Pope Paul VI Gold medal (1977), Fulbright-Hays Award (1979), Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Ibadan (1989), the Bendel Merit Award (1990), and the Delta State Merit Award for excellence in Arts (1995) just to mention a few.

In his home town, he gathered all his creative abilities and established what has become a Mecca for artist and art lovers across the globe. This international art centre is located at Agbarah-otor and is the venue for a series of Harmattan workshops that has awoken the artistic sensibilities and thought patterns of many participants over the years.

In 1994 during an interview, he claimed that the synthesis of the past and present should be a spring board for contemporary creations (Odokuma, 1994). This seems to be based on his style that is a conglomeration of the extracts of the past, and present art influences, as well as his experiences, a style that derives from continuous practice and experimentalism. But the question then arises? Do people really comprehend the realities of his works? What is the meaning of his works? Are they just the aesthetic-creations of the artist garnished with Urhobo and other cultural influences? Thus, this study attempts to go deep into deciphering from these indigenous forms and their intrinsic interpretations.

In this light, it is important to note that the published works of quite a number of scholars on Onobrapkeya has increased our knowledge about him. For example, Willett (1971) Adepegba (1984, 1995, 1998), Lawal (1985), Odokuma (1994), Okeke (1995), Akatakpo (1998), Dale (1998), Singletary (2002), Audu (2002), Ademuleya (2003), Odokuma (2009), Picton (2004); Layiwola (2009), Jari (1998), Oloidi (1998); Onobrakpeya(2004) Egonwa (2011). And in this, Willett (1971) is of the view that Onobrakpeya's work though often African in subject is not particularly African in style as Adepegba (1984) refers to him as the untiring experimentalist in Nigeria and abroad. And Adepegba (1995) adds that both traditional sculptural forms and craft motifs appeal to Onobrakpeya and stress that the motifs of craft such as ties and dye textiles and calabash decorative elements of his prints are often employed as backgrounds (Adepegba, 1995:102), suggesting that Onobrakpeya's technique of plastocast appears as single activities like masquerades surrounded by an aura of the supernatural.

Also, Lawal (1985) opines that Onobrakpeya is indisputably Nigeria's artist of the moment, while Odokuma (1994) describes Onobrapkeya as one of the most dedicated contemporary Nigerian artist, and speaking about his style Okeke (1995) mentions that he drew inspiration from Edo-Urhobo, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa-fulani and even Akan sources. Akatakpo (1998) however, acknowledges that Onobrakpeya is the most prolific artist and perhaps the most celebrated and publicized contemporary artist and printmaker in Africa today. Dale (1998) describes him as one of Nigeria's greatest printmakers the best lino printer and the most sought after book illustrator, and because of his prolific nature as an artist, Singletary (2002) attempted a classification of his works as Urhobo themes, Benin themes, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa/Fulani themes, respectively. In juxtaposition, Audu (2002) attempts to analyse the visual vocabulary of one of Onobrakpeya's work titled "*Rain and Cry at Ototogba*" by not relying on the artist biography while Ademuleya (2003) states that the Zaria revolution which brought Onobrakpeya, Nwoko, Okeke and others to limelight was not an accidental formation, but rather a carefully crafted political propaganda at least at its beginning.

And notwithstanding: Picton (2004) refers to Onobrakpeya as one of the most successful artist to have emerged in West Africa during the twentieth century, with a continuing and commanding influence on the generation of artist in Nigeria who have come to maturity in the post-colonial period. Tracing the historical development of the Zaria art society; Odokuma (2009) mentions Onobrakpeya as one the leading members; Layiwola (2009) postulates that Onobrakpeya's works transcend space and time in the manner in which he fuses age-long traditions and concepts with the new and ordinary; Jari (1998) attests to, as he claims that Onobrakpeya enriched Nigeria's contemporary art with images from his native Urhobo and Benin legends; Oloidi (1998) affirms that Uche Okeke (1933-2016), Yusuf Grillo (b. 1935), Demas Nwoko (b.1935) and Bruce Onobrakpeya (b.1932) are symbolic images of Zarianism: as they have influenced the major art schools in Nigeria with their Zarianist ideology; Okeke (1995) reveals that the theory of natural synthesis, championed by Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko and Bruce Onobrakpeya arose from the emergence of the best of the indigenous art traditions with the useful western ones; and Egonwa (2011) says Onobrakpeya's prints shows a poetic introverted approach to themes, colour scheme and even to composition and that hHe admits borrowing from diverse sources but these traite are internalized, broken down and thus results in new forms (Egonwa 2011:109)



**Figure 1:** Bruce Onobrakpeya, Blue Motifs, 1968  
Plastograph, 61cm x 46cm, Ovuomarom gallery  
Courtesy: Bruce Onobrakpeya, *The Spirit in Ascent* 1992

## **Interpretational Analysis**

Only works with indigenous qualities would be analyzed in this section. One of Onobrakpeya's early works titled *Blue Motifs* (1968) shows a conversation between two individuals (Dale, 1998).

The crisis-cross pattern of typical blue coloured Yoruba adire motifs is evident in this work (Dale, 1998). The broad characteristic of this style in terms of two dimensional human depictions is also common. This piece possesses elements of Egyptian frontality and diverse geometric forms. This style, show influences he derived from his days in Zaria which he classified as the Zaria indigo series (Onobrakpeya, 2014). The body of both figures tends to form part of the decorative designs expressed in their clothing. The work shows the early developmental stages of Onobrakpeya's style, a style which fused traditional forms and themes with western methods.

The conversation between these women seems to be intense as the woman on the left hand side of the picture, points at herself. The other woman in profile prevents the frontal one from emotional explosion. These actions can be identified as indigenous practices common in most Nigerian societies.

### **Emuobonuvie, 1976, 62 x 45.6cm**

Inspired by his style at Haystack Mountain School of Arts and Craft in the U.S as an artist in residence, Onobrakpeya made a series of prints representing the *Mamiwata* theme. A myth Onobrakpeya (1992) believes entered into folk art, literature and religion during colonial times.

*Emuobonuvie* (what one owns is worth more than a kingdom) consists of two identical female figures holding Lobsters, of interest is the linear and geometric patterns displayed on their bodies. These body decorations resemble Urhobo and Ife traditional tattoos and cultural marks (fig. 3a and 3b). In Urhobo land the mask on the forehead are called *Akprusi* and they number about seven to nine lines which represent purity (Odokuma,2009b).



Figure 2: Bruce Onobrakpeya  
Emuobonuvie, 1976, 62 x 45.6cm  
Plastograph,  
Courtesy: Bruce Onobrakpeya  
Courtesy: Perkin Foss where Gods and the Spirit of Ascent Mortals Meet



Figure 3a: Urhobo female figure wood, pigment, 104.2cm  
Walt Disney-Tishmen Collection of African Art



Fig 3b Brass Yoruba head  
Ife Style Bronze Head of a Female - PF.4667  
Southwestern Nigeria  
20th Century AD 14" (35.6cm) high x 5.5" (14.0cm) wide  
African Bronze  
Barakat, Gallery Stores Inc.

Stamped behind the figures are what seems to represent the blue adire patterned design of the Yoruba. This Komolafe(2011) calls Olokun designs. These designs come in diverse shapes and forms including; checkers, horizontal, diagonals, slants verticals, spirals, dots and cross hatched lines.

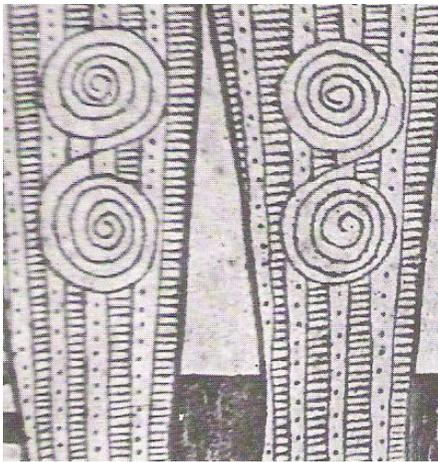


Figure 4: Details of some patterns from Emuobonuvie print.

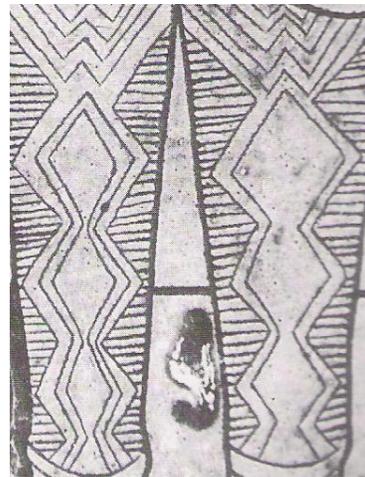


Figure 5: Details of some patterns from Figure 4

This work addresses the issue of resource control. The fish on their hands represents the resources, while the identical figures are the owners of the land. There are traces of Ife cultural marks and textures on this piece (fig 3b).

## Oba Aka, 1986

The verticality evident in most of his works during the 1980s is displayed here. The work shows a Benin *Oba* (king) holding a ceremonial sword (*eben*) to the administration of his people (Dale, 1998). His chiefs are shown receiving him. There are also people from other cultures acknowledging his title and personality.

Figure 6: Oba Aka Lino Engraving,  
36.8 x 3.8, 1986.  
Courtesy: The Zaria Art Society, A New  
consciousness, 1998.

Below the tree are a climber and other figures. On top of the tree are two attendants. Here, the artist tries to forge a story-line into his vertical concept. This work reveals the diverse influences he had derived from indigenous art forms and his ability to fuse them into his style.



## Uyendjo Orhue and Uyendjo Orhie, 1993, images II, Plastograph

Onobrakpeya has continued to modernize Urhobo traditional symbols through depictions of folklore in visual forms. The ability of the artist to transfer these concepts into a large repertoire of his designs reveals his enormous patriotic nature. Singletary (2002) and Layiwola (2009), speaks on both local and foreign influences. It is the marriage of these influences that has given birth to an encyclopedia of forms.

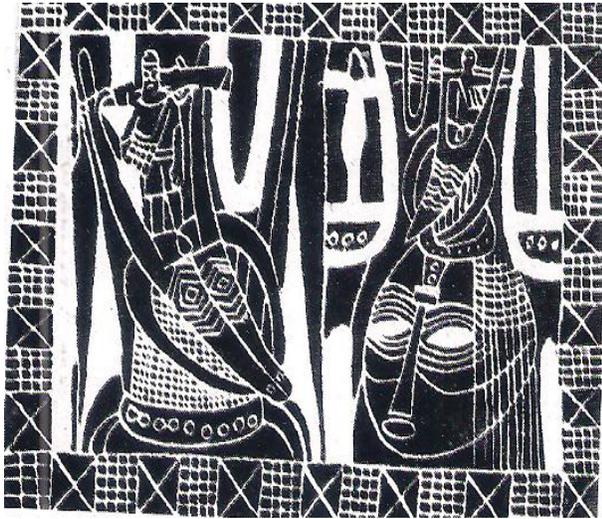


Figure 7: Uyendjo Orhue and Uyendjo Orhie 1993.



Figure 7b: Urhobo mask

Figure 7 show diverse types of Urhobo masks and headdresses, forms are commonly used in portraying some particular animals. The animal on the right hand portion of the picture looks more as a Ram. The ram has curved and vertical horns, this style is reminiscent of some traditional Urhobo masking styles (Fig. 7b). Onobrakpeya's style of form depiction is in a way similar to the Egyptian style.

### **Omovoni, 1998**

This piece shows a mother with a child alongside two figures flanked on each side of the main figure. All figures are geometrically linked to a heart-like face with mask-like facial features. The eyes of the face are the same colour with the mother figure, and the face the same colour with the child-figure. It is important to note that this heart-face, features in many of Onobrakpeya's works.

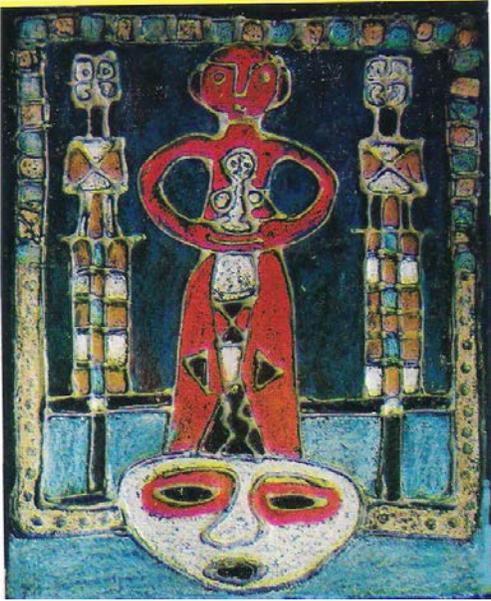


Figure 8: Bruce Onobrakpeya, *Omọ Voni* (mother-and child) 1998 additive plastograph  
 Courtesy: Bruce Onobrakpeya,  
*Jewels of Nomadic Images*, 2009.



Figure 8c: Mud sculptures from Oghara

The layout of this piece re-echoes the traditional Urhobo sculptural structure (fig 8c). Usually, the main figure is often flanked by two or more other figures. The interpretation of this piece could possibly mean the joy of motherhood. As the artist's mother may have played a major role in his life, not only at bringing him into the world, but as in encouraging his choice of profession. The heart-face below shows the mother's love or may represent the love she has for all her children. The heart-face may also represent the role the almighty has performed in his life. The influences he has derived from indigenous background are all reflected in this work. Or possibly it shows one of the major characteristics of the artist... the fact that Onobrakpeya has a very "big heart". This of course, he has shown to many young artists by encouraging them to be proud of their profession, and to keep practicing art. Thus, he has contributed in no small way at encouraging the development of modern art, by floating the regular Harmattan series since the early twenty-first century.

## Oni Ve mo I've (mother and two children) Water Colour Study

Another piece titled *Oni Ve mo I've* (mother and two children) shows the role and position of women in the Urhobo society, the mother cuddle their children both spiritually and physically, and the purity and sincerity of the mother reflects significantly on the bodies of the children.



The vibrations emanating from the mother reverberates on the children. Hence, it is a taboo for a married woman in Urhobo land to have an affair outside her marriage. It is their belief that evil may befall her and her children. Relationships in Urhobo land are sanctified. Looking at the drawing of the children, they seem to be merry-looking. The facial features on the mothers face shows a moderate calmness, as she is formally connected to her children.

Figure 9: Oni ve mo I've, water colour  
Plastograph  
Courtesy: Bruce Onobrakpeya,  
Jewels of Nomadic images, 2009.

## Emudia Kugbe (standing together) Plastograph Water Colour

*Emudia kugbe* means standing together. This water coloured plastograph is very significant in its political dispensation. About ten stylized figures stand tightly together showing some form of commitment or unity. Their faces which are Oblong with simple depictions of facial features, show focused individuals who seem to process a common goal. The indigenous motifs depicted on these forms are suggestive of Urhobo designs.



Figure 10: Emudi Kugbe,  
Plastograph, water colour study



Figure 11: Edjo Ovughere Ovu inland 1968.  
Courtesy: Perkins Foss where Gods and Mortal Meet,  
2004

The red background is a common traditional colour used by traditionalist in Urhobo land and other related cultures. Onobrakpeya (2004) tells us that red stands for beauty, dignity and class in Urhobo land.

The structures of the figures are reminiscent of some Urhobo wood sculptural styles (figure 11). These Urhobo carvings are engravings of the cannons of traditional sculpture. So much so that, no matter the influences of artist, established rules and patterns of fabrication are usually adhered to.

A critical examination of Onobrakepya's *Emudia kugbe* (figure 10) shows the central figure being depicted in form of a slit drum. The entire montage seem to replay the multitude of sculptures found in a shrine (figure 11), and thus, each figure has a specific function (Odokuma, 2013).

In Onobrakeya's piece cowries seem to be displayed at the fore ground of the print, traits like these are common in most Urhobo shrines, as the cowries represent spiritual currencies as well as prayers. The deeper meaning of this work is that Nigerians should forge ahead and be united.

### **Omọ Voni (mother and child)**



Figure 12: Omọ voni (mother and child)  
Additive plastograph  
Courtesy: Bruce Onobrakpeya  
Jewels of nomadic Images, 2009

This work displays nine geometric human forms arranged horizontally common in most Urhobo community shrines (figure 11). The medium of production is additive plastograph (Onobrakpeya, 2009). Of particular interest is the combination of traditional forms with modern structures to form a unique style. Onobrakpeya applied a number of colours in this work. The blues were highlighted by whites, while the yellow and browns were used to accentuate the attire of the mother figure. At the base of the female figure is a round circular object which may represent the achievements of her child. Although the title of this work is *Omọ voni* which is translated to mean mother and child in Urhobo culture, there seem to be the presence of other figures. These figures seem to represent ancestral or angelic protective guidance. Their objective is possibly to enable the child to achieve full fulfillment of his/her destiny.

The circular structure at the base of the mother's feet represents the future. It contains the abilities of the artist; the face on top of the head represents unseen energies of persons destined to be achievers. The handles at the end of the circular ball or plate symbolizes the efforts of the artists involved, hence, a reflection of the artist in question. He came in to the world through his mother which was facilitated by other spiritual forces. The door represents his mother through which he passed. And like a kite spring-up into recognition through his artistic abilities, and a destiny he identified and followed.

## Dance to Enchanting Songs

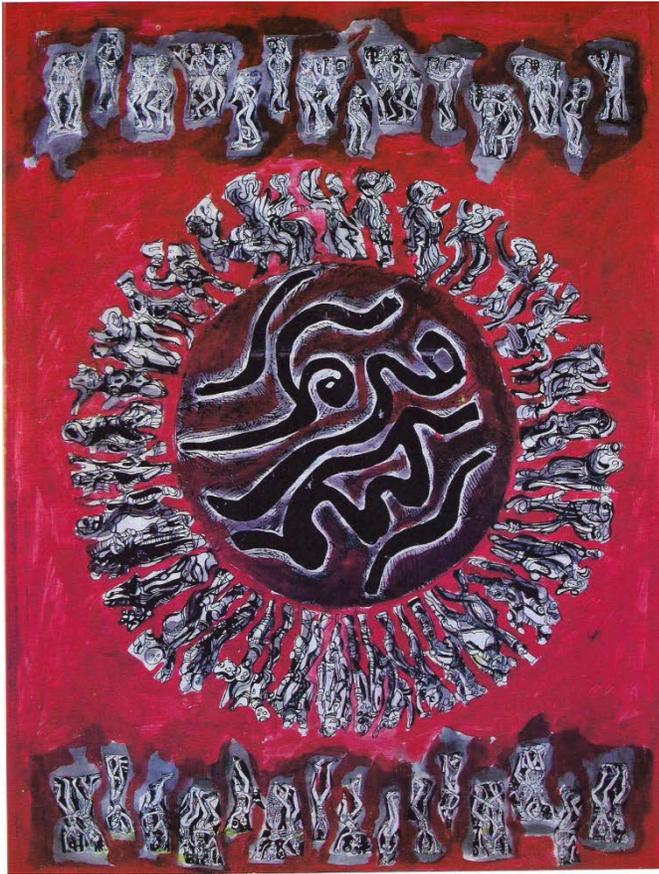
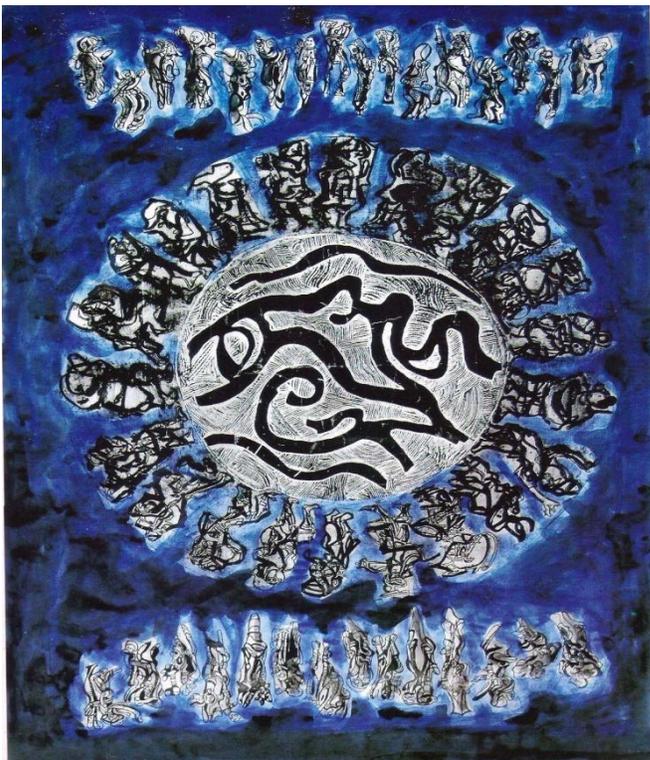


Figure 13: Dance to Enchanting songs Panel XI (water-colour)

This remarkable panel is set against a red background with figures dancing above, below and around a darker Marve ball with inserted shapes. The indigenous properties of the artist's background are clearly depicted in this work as he shows the vertical movements evident in some Urhobo sculpture and masquerades. The ball shape may represent the earth or the songs the individuals are responding to or even their culture. The lines on the face of the ball are varied, and while some are geometric, others appear spiral. The mystic evident in this panel derives largely from the choice of colours as well as the postures of the figures represented. In Urhobo land, red represents life (Onobrakpeya, 2004). Onobrakpeya (2004) sees red as a symbol of fertility, mystery and danger while white conveys supplications to the supernatural powers, as well as seal blessings (Onobrakpeya, 2004).

Therefore, this panel may display mysteries on earth, and the figures dancing on and around the ball come in varied sizes and shapes. Some figures seem to occupy more space than others, some are bolder than others. This panel reminds us about the saying that ‘all fingers are not equal.’ Even as many are given a chance to live on earth by the creator, they do not end up on the same level. Some may be rich, poor, famous, educational, illiterates, talented, drug addicts, prostitutes, clergymen, pastors, Bishops, fraudsters, etc. Some wear masks, and so you never get to know them, while others are difficult, simple or easygoing. These are mysteries which belong to the most high that know us before we were formed. This explains the position of the suspended figures above the ball, while those at the bottom never got the opportunity to complete their assignment. The ability of Onobrakepya to delve into the spiritual realm using indigenous elements clearly reveals his thinking with his simplicity in artistic depictions that results in a complexity of forms.

### **Dance to Enchanting Songs Panel XII**



The word enchanting refers to something spell bound; the panel shows three sets of images. The major image is like a knitted ball with figures dancing on and around it, the other two sets of figures are either floating above or below the ball, in the centre of the ball are lines designed in form of an elderly man's face, when seen from a distance. The figures around the ball are like a face are attached around the ball as if observing the laws of gravity, while the floating figures on each end of the ball are floating in space.

The songs may represent the energies attracting souls to the earth that no matter their location, they still remain on the surface of the earth. What may be attracting them is "divine chance" or "opportunities". The dance may symbolize the varied skills or life roles individuals carry on in earth. The surface lined face may signify the all-knowing creator, and the floating figures on top are those spirits waiting to occupy any vacant space around the ball. Hence, they are not as those around the ball and the figures below the ball represent souls who probably just left the earth, depicted upside down.

### **Classification of Some Selected Works with Indigenous Traits**

There are five noticeable styles based on the treatment of human forms. There are style **A**, **B**, **C**, **D** and **E**.

Style **A** is most common in his late sixties and early seventies works. This was after he left school and began to develop his style. Some of the characteristic traits of this style are that they are broad and consist of textured human forms. In some cases, both background and foreground on the picture plane are heavily ornamented with indigenous motifs, indigenous motifs that are common on the Adire material of the Yoruba (figure 1).

The second major style (style **B**) is characterized by works with elongated attributes. Besides the elongated traits, there appear as cultural marks on the faces of some of these figures (figure 2), reminiscent of some of the bronze Ife pieces (Figure 3b). Another feature of this style is that space is present on the picture plane, a style obviously executed in the early to late seventies.

The third style (style **C**) is most evident between the nineteen-eighties and nineteen-eighty nine, respectively. Here the Benin series of *Omo Aka* was produced. Diverse versions, with diverse postures as well as Benin cultural designs were fused into the works of this period as the structure of production was highly vertical in nature with textured designs from all over Nigeria, both hierarchy and geometricization, hence, common traits in his work.

The fourth style (style D) cuts across all styles. However, the height of mysticism is evident in this period as Onobrakpeya seemed to infuse a lot of mysticism into his works. This is also the style which possesses numerous masks with colour as a significant attribute of this style. Besides the mystic nature of his work, indigenous themes, subject matter and forms are incorporated into this style; style E (fifth style) reveals a number of style C and D with the verticality of the third style evident. , as the figures are flexible and a lot of space is provided in the background of the print, painting, plastograph or etching in the evolution of the Ibibé glyphs a style of writing formed by Onobrakpeya (Singletary, 2002) is displayed.

**Classification of Works with Indigenous Tendencies**

				
<b>Style A</b>	<b>Style B</b>	<b>Style C</b>	<b>Style D</b>	<b>Style E</b>
This style is common between 1968-1971	It occurs between 1972-1979	Most frequent between 1980-1989	Many of these pieces are common between 1990s	The style change in the 2000s
Indigenous element present	Indigenous traits continued	More indigenous adaptations	Mixed indigenous traits	Indigenous traits evident
Less attention was paid to figure decoration until after 1970	A continuation of figure decoration occurred	The bell shaped pattern was common	The subject of these works were more mystical	The figures were more stylized
Quite of number of religious figures and subjects	Social and religious themes are popular	The Benin kingship themes are common and Ibibé representatio	As the mysticism increased diverse materials and subjects were adopted	Figures were so stylized that they began to turn into hieroglyphics

		n evolving`		
Textured Adire-like designs were frequent	Diverse texture designs continued both in figure and picture plane	Vertical texturing particularly of the figures are evident	The works were very colourful	Vertical as well as circular forms are obvious
The prominence of elegant and broad figures	More of the elongated figures	Figures were arranged in form of a plague. Elongation is also evident	The figures are a mixture of elegant, elongated and stylized figures	Figures not looking particularly like figures
Figures tend towards a geometric stance	The geometric depictions continued	The geometric trait is obvious	The African traits of geometricization is evident	Highly graphical
The background is spacious	The background is slightly textured. In some cases with few spaces.	Traces of spaces is evident in the background	The background is heavily stylized	Space exist in the background
Figures appear rigid	Mixture of flexible and rigid figures	This period is dynamic as hierarchy is noticed here	Mixture of flexibility, rigidity and dynamism	Figures are flexible
The style was simple	Complexity in simplicity was gradually developing Yoruba and Hausa subject matter common	Highly decorated Yoruba influences are noticeable in this style	Evidence of decoration not as in the 80s	He devised a writing style called Ibiebi glyphs.
Hausa and Fulani forms with Urhobo themes and artists creation elongated traits not consistent			The heart-like face became a common trait in his works	

## Conclusion

Interpreting indigenous symbols and forms is often the prerequisite of the art-historian. It is true that when these symbols are used in contemporary times the initial interpretation may be altered. However, artist like Bruce Onobrakpeya have consciously made efforts as we have seen to fuse these symbols and forms into his work. These attempts have been successful so far, even as the initial technique of production was derived from Western education. His experimentalization of styles and techniques has led him to produce what is often called African modern art which he achieved by combining African sensibilities with diverse personal ideas into his work. The mixture resulted in a style filled with mixed traits of indigenous, Western and self-images. When looking at Onobrakpeya's work from a distant, it is difficult to attempt a classification of his style, but a careful observation of its characteristics reveal subtle changes over time, changes that are noticeable in his initial works where he produced semi-naturalistic works, but as time went on, they turned to stylized pieces.

Compared to the works of the past, his previous works are more stylized and abstracted. Initially, his designs processed a lot of Yoruba, Hausa and Benin themes and motifs, but as time went on, the works became more abstracted except the Urhobo titles, which continued. Onobrakpeya's thought pattern is clearly noticeable in his work, his intense affection for his mother is expressed in many "mother and child" series he executed. Family is of great interest for him, hence the presence of figures uniting or grouped together is common.

I content that Onobrakpeya's talent actually comes from God as he shows in his numerous works in print, plastograph, plastocast, installation, as well as in etching. From the foregoing, it is evident that Onobrakpeya through-out his five decades of artistic production, has been able to provide a synthesis of indigenous techniques and forms with Western tendencies resulting in multiple styles rich in meaning and identity. And of importance, is the interpretation of his works which shows that although the work appears simple, it is actually laden with deep meaning, even of which the artist himself may not comprehend.

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