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## PRAXIS CONFLICT MANIFESTATIONS IN THE WORKS OF SOME NIGERIAN DIASPORA PAINTERS

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### Abstract

This study is derived from a survey of 39 artists, identified prompters, manifestations and resolutions of praxis conflicts traceable from the pre-diaspora works to the diaspora works of eleven Nigerian Diaspora painters. Findings showed that praxis conflict influenced by multicultural environments were a major factor in the development of Diaspora art, which these painters explored and resolved such praxis conflicts with remarkable changes in their artistic practices. A principle that is now established is that, changes in an artist works can be interpreted from a praxis conflict perspective. This can assist artists in praxis-conflicts resolution and the mapping of trajectories; and, on the other hand, aid scholars in a determination of awareness-propelled and non-awareness-propelled praxis.

**Keywords:** African art, African Diaspora, Conflict and resolution, Contemporary African art, Modern art,

**Introduction**Razaq Olatunde Rom Kalilu & \*Timothy Olusola Ogunfuwa

Conflict is a disagreement that occurs when A and B supposedly differ in their submissions on a particular subject matter (*The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2000, p. 239). There could also be order in the opposing submissions of A and B on such subject matter (Worsley, 1976, pp. 373-392; Also peruse Llewellyn, 2019, and compare with Kerwin, Doherty and Harman, 2011). But conflict resolution determines the consequences of many actions and/or reactions (Shonk, 2020; Wani, 2011, p. 105; Cohen, 2010; Stark, 2001: p. 116). Conflict, then, is one of the secret games that determine emotional state of the individual or group involved (Kandell, 2014; Romo, 2012; Santrock, 1988, pp. 398-411; Hebb, 1968, pp. 234-255). Olaleye (1991)

simplifies this state by reiterating that, “it is difficult to talk about people and their deep-rooted conflicts and yet strip from such a piece of writing [or existential argument] any tinge of emotion” (p. 2). Thus, both conflict and resolution, order or management can metaphorically be regarded as lifelong twins resulting from two separate but closely related cosmic eggs; they necessarily cohabit in their formation: neither of them will exist, at least in abstract, without the structural existence (real or imagined) of the other.

It is important to understand that conflict is complex and can be resolved in many different ways. Because of this complexity, many people, including conflict management scholars and strategists, often view conflict resolution in a limited way. They usually see it only as a way to solve problems that arise from opposing situations involving individuals, groups, communities, societies, or countries. It is, therefore, expected that such solution or resolution should be workable in logical and traceable format. This seeming logic of resolution, order or management has made conflict resolution and strategy a unique subject that cuts across disciplines, especially in the social sciences (Neu & Kriesberg, 2019; Ritauw, Maftuh, & Malihah, 2018; Salih, 1993), the physical sciences (Clapp, & Mortenson, 2011; Ramzan, *et al.* 2011; Kocabas, 1991) and in some aspects of the arts and humanities. It is, however, pertinent to observe that it is uncommon to imagine, in a scholarly fashion, those possible scenarios of conflict resolution and management in the Visual Arts. The individualistic nature of art and artists could be primarily responsible for such disciplinary insipidness.

Our conception of conflict and conflict in art praxis is provided here in order to guide the understanding of our restrictive usage of the term conflict and perhaps to establish some definition in respect of further scholastic engagements on conflict and resolution in the Visual Arts. Conflict in art could be defined as the conscious and unconscious struggle with the means and processes of artistic actualisation that are visually, theoretically and practically different from what the artist is generally known to do with their art. What this further infers is that, a practice conflict that thus develops is not obvious in its existence until

the conflict resolution has been concluded and is many times exacted by the artist.

There are journals, books and edited books dedicated to concept, study and discourse on (the) Diaspora. Also, many scholarly resources exist on the subjects of conflict, order and conflict resolution, on the one hand; and African art and Nigerian art, on the other. Furthermore, there are rich individual literature materials that abound on all these areas in vast dimensions. A few in the category of the Diaspora or diaspora are Grossman (2019), Jimenez (2015), Fischer (2011), Jegede (2011), Adebayo (2010), Kafle (2010), Anteby-Yemini and Berthomière (2006), Nashy *et al.* (2004), Oguiibe (2004), Davidson (2003), Mutume (2003), Andrea and Overfield (2001), Segal (2001 & 1995), and Olaleye (1991).

Majority of the literature materials on conflict, order and resolution focus on cultural diversity, personality, science, and the varied socio-geography of human interaction and influence. Also, a few discourses in this category are [Hogan](#) and [Sherman](#) (2020), Shonk (2020), Wani (2011), Cohen (2010), Myrdal (2006), Spradley and McCurdy (2003), Held (2000), Giffiths (1998), Galbraith (1996), Gilroy (1995, pp. 166-169), Hogg and Abrams (1995), Baron and Byrne (1994), Dinnett (1991), Beatie (1989), and Waddington (1977). The question of “What is a person?” and the understanding of a person’s attitudinal behaviour are the focus of Eitzen and Zinn’s (2004), Radford and Kirdy (1975), and Jefferys (1962).

Literature materials on African Art and Nigerian Art especially on artists and art praxes also abound. Some of these materials include Kalilu (2013, 2010 and 1992), Ogunfuwa (2015, 2012), Ogunfuwa, Oladugbagbe and Emeriewen (2013, pp. 20-29). Oladugbagbe and Ogunfuwa (2013), Offoedu-Okeke (2012), Egonwa (2005), Magnin and Soullillou (1996), Hogg and Abrams (1995), Willett (1993), De la Croix, Tansey and Kirkpatrick (1991), Vogel and Ebong (1991), Fosu (1986), Diop (1974), and Alamo, Stacey and Porthan (1984). Ogunfuwa

It would be observed that scholarly interrogation and the engagement of critical discourse in all the three areas highlighted in the preceding paragraphs have spanned three decades. As significant as most of

these literature materials are in their fields, only two of them are directly focused on practice conflict resolutions in Nigerian painters. Ogunfuwa (2015) and Jegede (2012) creatively illustrate conflict possibilities in artists. Praxis conflict as a subject of scholarship in (and of) Nigerian Diaspora art and artists has not been a mainstream concern of the scholars' interrogation. This notwithstanding, the scholarly works mentioned are tangentially significant as background to this essay.

This study is a general morphological examination of works by some Nigerian Diaspora painters. The study was conducted to identify the prompters of praxis conflicts and the manifestations of such conflicts and their resolutions as deducible from the works of the artists. The praxis conflict pattern that manifested in the forms, contents, themes, contexts, styles and materials of the works of the painters, starting from the pre-diasporic period to their diasporic period, were considered. The study also considered the effectiveness of praxis conflict as a methodological perspective for the study of artists and their art. This was done with a view to establishing praxis conflict as a significant underlining factor that propels creativity and evolution of artists and their art.

Eleven Nigeria Diaspora painters that responded to our structured questionnaire survey in 2014 were studied. The eleven painters are Wale Adenle, Bolaji Campbell, Chidi Okoye, Harold Egbune, Hassan Aliyu, Nnenna Okore, Oluseyi Ogunjobi, Tunde Famous Jnr, Victor Ekpuk, Wole Lagunju and Yisa Akinbolaji. Aside from the questionnaire, Key Informant Interviews were conducted with some of the artists. The administration of the questionnaire and interviews were done electronically. The questions of whether the apparent changes in the painters' pre-diasporic form, style, content and media are a part of their diasporic acceptability problems was the target of the survey. In doing this, the study considered whether over time there exist practical conflicts in the visual expressions of the painters.

The study was contextualised as projecting the individual (subject) as making an expression or taking an action (object), which results in a reaction or conflict (effect). In this regard, and in the Visual Arts,

practice conflict may evolve from exposure to material, style, form, context and concept, which could result in certain archetypes that may be imbibed as a consequence of both emotion and location influence on the artist. Such influence may lead to certain degrees of paradigm shifts in the creative expression of the artists. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.



Fig. 1

An Illustration of the contextual framework of praxis conflicts.

Conceptualiser/illustrator: Olusola Ogunfuwa (2013).  
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Corollary to this contextual framework is one of the Personality theories ([Hogan](#) & [Sherman](#), 2020; Holzman, 2020; McCrae, 2011; Funder, 2001, p. 2; Feist & Feist, 1998, pp. 3 & 405; Davey & Harris, 1982, p. 15; and Hebb, 1968, p. 12) called personalism (Lázaro & Sganzerla, 2020; Lavelly, 1991). It is usually called the “psychology of the individual theory” (Wallace, 1993, p. 4) and it is on that the study is anchored. The personality theory itself is anchored on Personalism theory, as established by Gordon Allport (Feist & Feist, 1998, p. 405). The theory takes cognisance of environmental condition as possible independent variable that can affect the individual’s personality. The second, supporting theory is the Marx’s dialectical theory (Marx &

Engels, 1848), which states that conflict can be understood as a necessary and transformative process (Marx, 1867). This conflict generating process can also be applied to artistic practices of diaspora artists, which often embody dialectical tensions between inherited cultural expressions and the demands of their new sociocultural environments. For example, the artist's native praxis represents the thesis; while the diasporic context, which includes the unfamiliar norms, expectations, and aesthetic pressures, forms the antithesis (Kalilu & Ogunfuwa, 2023). The resulting synthesis emerges through experimental works that may temporarily diverge from the artist's established style, reflecting a visual negotiation of identity, belonging, and creative autonomy. These moments of praxis conflict are not signs of disorientation but rather expressions of evolving artistic consciousness shaped by the contradictions of displacement and adaptation. This theory is further affirmed by Igwebuike (2022) as a suitable "model" for the understanding and engaging conflictual social parameters in contemporary times.

#### **Praxis Conflict Promoters and Manifestations** *Nigerian Diaspora Painters*

The questionnaire for the survey, with 42 questions, was segmented into five parts, severally dealing with the issues of: relocation to the Diaspora; art, policies, and economy in Nigeria; painting practice and patronage, and activities outside painting; and volunteer information. Some of the samples became members of the Diaspora through invitation by some educational institutions, but the majority of them considered emigration due to the combination of some insecurity aspects of the Nigerian nation, which included political insecurity, economic and financial insecurity, and academic and professional insecurity. Improved information technology has been a major source of information awareness provider for humans all over the world. Our samples followed news on politics, economic, art practice and appreciation about Nigeria. They are abreast of Nigerian activities. In fact some of them often visit Nigeria and half of them always consider partial or permanent relocation back to Nigeria. Eight (8) of the sample immediately went back to painting and their other artistic activities when they arrived the Diaspora, while it took the other three (3)

diaspora painters over two years to start artistic practice. Undoubtedly, many of them found art appreciation in their country of domicile very high, while also believing that art appreciation in Nigerian before their sojourn was only moderate.

One major aspect of the questionnaire design was to determine contradictions that may result from the mind-set of the sample. This was done purposely to first determine whether the sample can shift in their attitude concerning the level of practice. Questions 21 and 22 were repeated as Questions 31 and 32, though presented not exactly in the same way. Surprisingly, three (3) of the samples did not quite synchronise the latter answers with the former. For example, in one questionnaire, a sample answered “Not often” for both Questions 21 and 22, but answered “Often” for Questions 31 and 32. Another answered “Often” for Question 22 and answered “Not often” for the corresponding Question 32. Again, a sample answered “Not at all” for Question 21, but answered “Not often” for the corresponding Question 31. These disparities call attention to the shifting, but natural, human behavioural tendencies, which sometimes lead to conflict of decisions or outputs.

It was unanimously agreed that the diasporic environment in which the samples lived or live is of major significance in their professional practice. Seven (7) agreed that it was “very significant”, while four (4) said it was significant. Thus, with this confirmation, we must begin to look in the direction of the environment, a place in space, as a major affective symbol that could determine the praxis outcome.

While previous questions were indirectly related to the question of praxis conflict, Questions 33 to 40 were solely designed to aid the determination of morphological scenario of praxis conflicts as existing in, and as a part of, the career of the practicing artist in general, and in diaspora painters that have been particularly selected as samples for this case study. In this wise, Questions 33 to 36 tried to search for changes or evolutions that could occur in the process of practice within a stretch of time. All the samples, except one, averagely concurred that their form, style, content and medium have changed very significantly. They, however, differed in type of influence in the environment that

could have gingered such change. These influences were raised in the last set of questions: 37 to 40. Dialectical resolution to change was a foremost influence in the form, style, content and material of the majority of sample; followed by the patronage of their works.

Findings from the questionnaire reveal a dynamic interplay between personal agency and environmental influence in shaping the artistic praxis of Nigerian diaspora painters. Contradictions in responses, stylistic shifts, and evolving motivations highlight the complexity of human behaviour and decision-making. From a Personalist lens, these nuances affirm the artist as a conscious, free and morally responsive agent whose choices are shaped by both inner convictions and relational contexts. Their resolve to adapt and evolve reflects the dignity and intentionality central to Personalism. Meanwhile, the presence of conflicting responses and the transformative impact of diasporic experience align with Dialectical theory, which views contradiction as a tension that drives growth. The artists' synthesis of past experiences and new realities exemplifies dialectical movement, where conflict fosters creative resolution. Together, both theories illuminate the praxical tensions and evolving identities of diaspora painters within a globalised artistic context.

Wale Adenle's artistic evolution exemplifies the tension and transformation central to both Personalism and Dialectical theory. His shift from cartooning to painting, and later to sculpted mixed-media works, reflects a deeply personal journey of self-expression and renewal. Adenle's transition underscores the autonomy and dignity of the artist as a person navigating new environments, freed from institutional constraints and driven by internal resolve. His morphological experimentation, that is, the "deconstruction and reconstruction" of surfaces, is not merely technical but a manifestation of his evolving identity and intentionality.

Simultaneously, the praxis conflicts that emerged around 2013-2014 align with Dialectical theory, which views such contradictions as necessary stages in creative and intellectual development. Adenle's oscillation between past and present styles, and his negotiation between tradition and innovation, represent a self-dialoguing process:

thesis (pre-diasporic style), antithesis (mixed-media transformation), and synthesis (sculpted-paintings in transition). This ongoing tension between continuity and change is not a flaw but a generative force. This affirms that conflict, when embraced, leads to higher artistic and personal resolution.



Fig. 2

Wale Adenle (2014). *Out of Touch II*. Mixed media on deconstructed & reconstructed wood. H.91cm x W.127cm x D18cm. Courtesy of the Razaq Olatunde Rom Kalilun & Timothy Olusola Ogunfuwa

Bolaji Campbell's artistic transformation following his relocation to the Diaspora reflects a profound negotiation between personal identity and external environment. His early use of manually prepared pigments and natural materials reveals a deep cultural rootedness aligned with the *Ona* movement's philosophy (Figure 3). This fidelity to material authenticity underscores the artist's agency as a moral and conscious being, guided by intrinsic values and cultural memory. Campbell's shift from sombre, centripetal forms to vibrant, multi-perspectival compositions marks a renewed intentionality shaped by diasporic influences.

His evolution also exemplifies progression: as the tension between pre-diasporic material constraints and newfound media abundance fuels creative synthesis. His transition from *Ona*'s earthy tones to the luminosity of oil paints represents not a rupture but a dialectical unfolding that moves from thesis to antithesis and finally to synthesis

(Figure 4). It begins with traditional pigment preparation, progresses through the diasporic experience of material and cultural plurality, and culminates in a psychodynamically charged new visual language. The fluidity of his stylistic growth conceals the creative tension that drives his artistic renewal. Accordingly, both theories affirm that Campbell's praxis conflict is as much rooted in philosophical inquiry as it is shaped by circumstance, reflecting an evolving artistic self-engagement in continuous dialogue with environment, culture, and temporality.



Fig. 3

Bolaji Campbell (1996). *Recreation*. Natural pigment on paper. Size not indicated. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 4

Bolaji Campbell (2009). *Storm Rider*. Oil on canvas. Size not indicated.  
Courtesy of the artist.

The artistic oscillation of Chidi Okoye between non-figural abstraction and figural representation reveals a subtle yet persistent praxis conflict rooted in personal intentionality and evolving environmental influence. This fluctuation highlights the artist's autonomy and inner dialogue, manifesting an enduring selfhood that navigates the tension between inherited aesthetic values and new cultural stimuli. The marginal nature of this conflict suggests a deliberate and gradual negotiation of identity, where each compositional decision becomes an expression of personal meaning and moral agency.

Dialecticism offers a framework for understanding Okoye's stylistic transitions as stages in a developmental process. His pre-diasporic abstract mode reflects an established artistic foundation (Figure 5), while the diasporic shift toward figural imagery introduces a contrasting direction (Figure 6). The ongoing movement between these approaches, rather than reaching a final resolution, reveals a continuous process of creative negotiation in which tension itself becomes a source of artistic vitality. This subtle yet ongoing praxis conflict embodies dialectical movement, through which artistic identity

evolves by engaging opposing forms and cultural contexts. In this light, the marginal conflict in Okoye's work is not a sign of indecision or inconsistency, but a profound expression of a diaspora artist in transition, shaped by the interplay of personal depth and dialectical transformation.



Fig. 5

Chidi Okoye (1997). *Longevity*. Acrylic on canvas. 76cm x 102cm.  
Courtesy of Okoye, n.d.



Fig. 6

Chidi Okoye (2010). *Family*. Mixed media on canvas. 58.5cm x 89cm.  
Courtesy of Okoye, n.d.

The artistic journey of Harold Egbune exemplifies the adaptive resilience and creative reinvention. His transition from cartooning and illustration to computer-aided painting reflects a personal response to new existential and professional realities. This evolution highlights the dignity of the individual as a self-determining agent who redefines his creative identity in pursuit of meaning, survival, and excellence. His embrace of digital media and educational outreach through 3D tutorials demonstrates conscious engagement with his environment and the personalist ideal of growth through intellectual and relational expansion (Figure 7). Egbune's transformation as a creative resolution can also be seen as emerging from necessity and tension. The limitations of his pre-diasporic practice met the technological and cultural abundance of his new context, producing a hybrid form that merges traditional skill with contemporary opportunity. This evolution is not merely technical but dialectical, as the friction between old and new methods generates a higher creative expression.

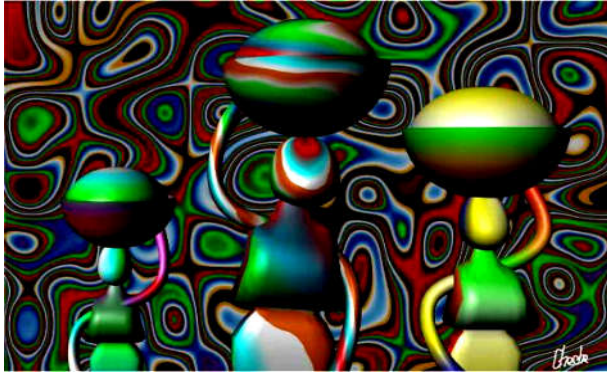


Fig. 7

Harold Egbune (Year not indicated). *Untitled*. Digital painting transferred on canvas. Size not indicated. Courtesy of the artist.

Ogunjobi's multidisciplinary artistic identity, spanning textile design, painting, performance, and costume-making, reflects a richly layered selfhood shaped by cultural heritage and diasporic transformation. His creative expression testifies to the holistic nature of the person as an integrated being whose art is inseparable from lived experience, memory, and relational identity (Figure 8). His sustained engagement with the aesthetic and performative ethos of the Osogbo Art School reveals a deep fidelity to his cultural origins, even as the diasporic environment offers new opportunities for visibility and experimentation. The textile-driven quality of his painting practice serves as a symbolic extension of his personal narrative, weaving together past and present, tradition and innovation. Dialectically, Ogunjobi's artistic development represents the merging of two complementary forces: the indigenous, performative traditions of Osogbo and the diverse, multicultural influences of the Diaspora. His work transforms the tension between these worlds into a dynamic interplay of media, form, and meaning. The integration of wax resist, dye painting, and oil on canvas, combined with performative and sartorial elements, demonstrates a practice that is both hybrid and harmonious, born from the creative balance between rootedness and reinvention.



Fig. 8

Seyi Ogunjobi (Year not indicated). *He Made Them and Created Them*. Wax resist on cloth.

Size not indicated. Courtesy of Ogunjobi, n.d.

Hassan Aliyu's journey looks less like a stylistic shift and more like a reckoning with place, with history, and with the self. In his early days, his paintings were quiet but intense: textured, elongated, restrained in palette, almost meditative (Figure 9). But the diaspora did not just offer him new materials; it confronted him with new realities. Marginalisation, cultural displacement, and the weight of postcolonial memory pressed into his practice, and the canvas became a site of negotiation.



Fig. 9

Hassan Aliyu (Year not indicated). *The Dance II*. Mixed media. Size not indicated

(Aliyu and Kamalu, 1987).

Aliyu's transformation is deeply human. It reflects a person responding to the world not just with technique, but with conscience. His move away from modeling paste and toward layered, crystalline compositions mirrors an inner shift: one that is of reorientation of purpose, a search for clarity amid complexity. His art is no longer just about form; it is about voice (Figure 10). The early abstractions and the later thematic clarity are not opposites, but stages in a process. The contradiction between his pre-diasporic aesthetic and the demands of his diasporic context did not cancel each other out. They collided, and from that collision, something new emerged. His work now speaks in a language forged through conflict, one that interrogates power, identity, and belonging with both urgency and grace.



Fig. 10

Hassan Aliyu (2024). *Crimson Tide I*. Collage. 200cm x 240cm. Courtesy Razaq Olatunde Romkele & Timothy Ogunfuwa

Nnenna Okore's transition from *paintings and mixed media works* to her *newly developed sculpture synthesis while in the diasporic space* reveals a profound shift not only in medium and form, but also in artistic consciousness. This shift is marked by a layered praxis conflict: one that unfolds across material, identity, and spatial engagement. The early watercolour work reflects a private, introspective self (Figure 11). It characterises a person exploring form through delicate gestures and controlled abstraction. The medium itself, fluid and ephemeral, mirrors a phase of quiet searching. In contrast, the sculptural works of her diaspora period embody a more assertive, embodied self. The use of clay, rope and materials signal a

tactile engagement with memory, ancestry, and place. The conflict here is not rupture, but growth: a movement from internal reflection to external assertion, from solitary mark-making to communal materiality. Okore's evolving practice affirms the Personalist view that the artist reflects a journey toward deeper self-realization.

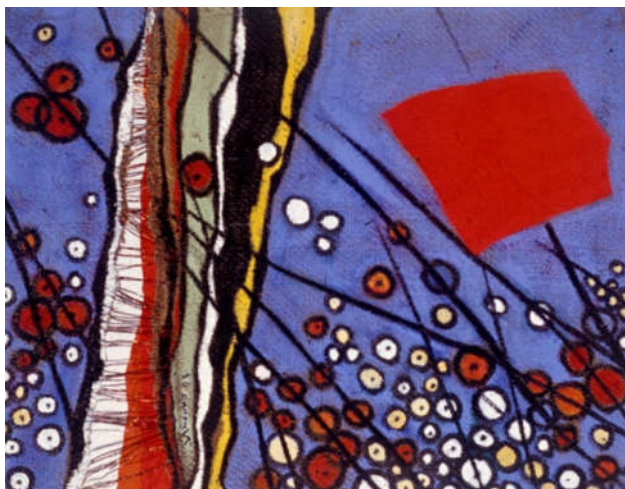


Fig. 11

Nnenna Okore (1998-1999). *Untitled #6*. Watercolour & ink. Size not stated. *Praxis Conflict Manifested in the Works of the Nigerian Diaspora Painters*

While the watercolour phase represents a restrained, two-dimensional exploration of form and space, the diaspora experience introduces cultural plurality, and material abundance with its dislocation. The sculptural installations become the fusion embodying organic complexity and spatial dominance (Figure 12). The conflict lies in the negotiation between fragility and strength, surface and structure, containment and expansion. Okore's shift from paper to suspended clay forms is not a rejection of her past but a dialectical resolution that reflects contradiction becoming the engine of transformation. Her work now occupies space, commands presence, and invites viewers into a multisensory dialogue, reflecting a praxis that has matured through tension.



Fig. 12

Nnenna Okore (2008). *Anyanwu (The Sun in Igbo) Series*. Clay and rope. 305cm x 330cm x 305cm (Preece, 2013, p. 1).

Like a few other Nigerian Diaspora painters, Tunde Afolayan Famous Jnr.'s artistic journey is marked by a layered praxis conflict. He studied Graphic Design in Yaba College of Technology and practised advertising, teaching and painting when he graduated. He later had his Master degree in 1989 in the United States of America. He came back to Nigeria and in 1990 staged an exhibition of paintings and drawings titled *Portrait of a time*. His early works, especially those showcased in 1990 exhibition, were rendered in watercolour and oil, often abstract and ornamented. In *Palm Wine Tapper*, the watercolour medium and monochromatic palette evoke a sense of restraint and intimacy (Figure 13). The figure is stylized, adorned in traditional attire, yet rendered with a quiet sensitivity. This pre-diasporic work reflects an artist grounded in cultural familiarity, expressing identity through symbolic elegance. These pieces carried the imprint of a designer's sensibility, which are usually stylized, symbolic, and/or formally experimental. This phase reveals an artist deeply engaged with Nigerian cultural expressions.



Fig. 13

Tunde Afolayan Famous Jr. (1990). *Palm Wine Tapper*. Watercolour

Size not indicated (Famous Jr., 1989, p. 7).

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However, his diasporic turn, which followed his relocation and deeper immersion in the American art scene, introduced a shift in both medium and style. Acrylic became his dominant material, and his forms grew more realistic, his colours more vibrant. In contrast to the *Palm Wine Tapper*, *Passage of Rite 4* bursts with colour, movement, and expressive force (Figure 14). The diasporic experience has expanded the artist's palette, both literally and metaphorically. The figure is vibrant, adorned with beads and ritualistic markings, set against a dynamic background. Here, the artist's self is no longer just reflecting culture; it is reinterpreting and performing it. This

transformation suggests a reorientation of self, shaped by new cultural stimuli and professional demands. This does not necessarily mean a loss of identity, but it is a recalibration of adaptation, response, and re-ascertaining meaning through new visual language. His continued focus on environmental and socio-cultural themes affirms that the core of his artistic self remains intact, even as the surface evolves.



Fig. 14

Tunde Afolayan Famous Jr. (2014). *Passage of rite 4*. Acrylic on canvas  
Razaq Olatunde Rom Kalilu & \*Timothy Oluosola Ogunfuwa  
Size not indicated. Courtesy of the artist.

Victor Ekpuk's artistic journey is marked by continuity in transformation. His pre-diasporic work, *The Song of Mami Wata*, is rich with symbolic density. A part of serialised works on *Walaha*, the slate

on which Islamic scripts are traditionally written in Nigeria as an “artistic medium” since 1995 (Figure 15). He referred to them as the “Manuscript series”. It suggests a vibrant interplay of a stickman figure and signs drawn from Uli, Nsibidi, Ona, and Egyptian hieroglyphics. This “calligraphic organicism,” as Akatakpo and Filani (1993) described, reflects a deeply personal engagement with indigenous semiotics. This phase reveals an artist rooted in cultural memory, using symbol as a language of selfhood and spiritual resonance. The interwoven nature of figures and symbols suggests a unified worldview, where identity and meaning are inseparable.



Fig. 15

Victor Ekpuk (2000-2001). *The Song of Mami Wata*. Acrylic on wood board.

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123cm x 58cm. Courtesy of the artist.

In contrast, *You Be Me, I Be You* (2006), created in the diaspora, reflects a shift in symbolic architecture (Figure 16). The diptych presents two stylised heads facing each other, filled with intricate, compartmentalised symbols. The figures and signs are no longer fused

but spatially distinct, suggesting a more analytical, dialogic approach. Dialectically, a visual conversation between selves, cultures, and histories is evoked. Personalism interprets this as a matured self: one that has moved from cultural immersion to cultural interrogation. The reduction in colour and the emphasis on black-and-white (and in some works, red-and-white, blue-and-white) linework signal a turn inward, a probing of essence rather than ornament. The dislocation caused by his relocation assisted his hybridity of form and the need to recontextualise meaning. Ekpuk's praxis conflict is subtle but profound. It lies in the shift from symbolic fusion to symbolic architecture, from colour-rich myths to monochromatic introspection. Both Personalism and Dialectical theory affirm that his evolution is not a total retreat from the former, but an extension of a creative self.

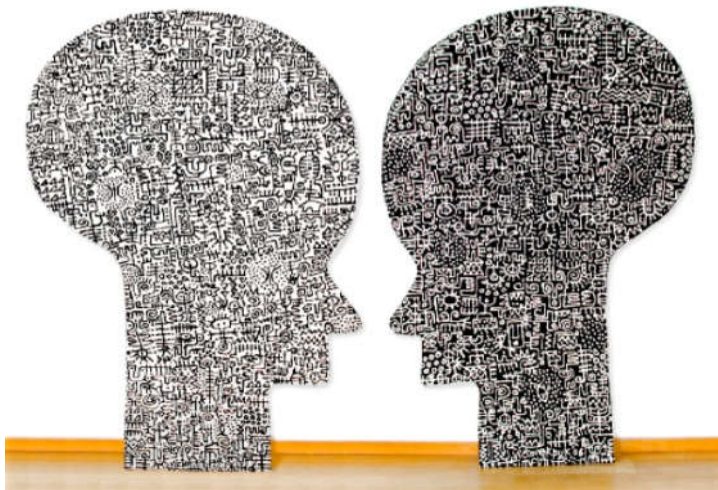


Fig. 16

Victor Ekpuk (2006). *You Be Me, I Be You*. Acrylic on wood, diptych  
144cm x 182cm (Offoedu-Okeke, 2012, p. 490).  
Razaq Olatunde Rom Kalilu & \*Timothy Olusola Ogunfuwa

Wole Lagunju has had significant turnaround in his artistic articulation and presentation since the short time he arrived in Diaspora in 2007. Jegede (2014) noted that, "Lagunju's sojourn in the United States of America was in response to the need for access and exposure" (p. 4).

The last ten years of his practice have been glaring with conflicts in his practice dimension and contextual focus. For example, Lagunju's pre-diasporic paintings and drawings are filled with abstractions of expressionistic and symbolic tendencies. As a diaspora painter, he made more art installations, but *Gelede* and his many other serialised drawings on *Gelede* masks opened the frontier into a new contextual commentary on space and time in global culture, with the parodying of women of Western classical fashion. This became a major practice conflict posture, with a marked deviation from his pre-diasporic disposition. At first, his subjects were drawn from diasporic political matters (Figure 17) and later came the serialisation period when he started to produce the *Gelede*-induced painting, drawn from his Yoruba background (Figure 18). His transition interference period was between 2007 and 2008 for the first of his praxis conflict then he suddenly flipped again into another conflict between 2011 and 2012. In praxical terms, his conflict element was his material in the first experienced conflict; but in the second, it was culture propelled by relocation.

Fig. 17

Wole Lagunju (2008). *Africa, Artists, Religion and Globalisation*.

Multimedia installation with *adire* fabric wrapped trash with twigs.  
Multi-dimensional.

Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 18

Wole Lagunju (2016). *The foibles of imperialism*. Oil on canvas. 76.2cm x 55.88cm. Courtesy of the artist.

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In his pre-diasporic works, Yisa Akinbolaji painted in realism and abstraction with a balanced poise (Figures 19-21). Like many of his colleagues who graduated from Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Nigeria, Akinbolaji also painted “human mass” and landscapes using bright colours (Figure 19). Now in Canada, his composition and style have changed. Abstraction dominates his works, but he still inputs his boisterous colours. Human images have almost vanished from his painting compositions and where they appear, the anatomies are exaggerated (Figure 20). This is a striking departure from his pre-diaspora experience. However, Yisa’s major contribution to art

materials for creative technique is both historical and laudable. He calls the material/medium *Remoglue* (Akinbolaji, Y., n.d.).



Figure 19

Yisa Akinbolaji (1993). *Livelihood*. Oil on board. Size not indicated.

Courtesy of the artist.

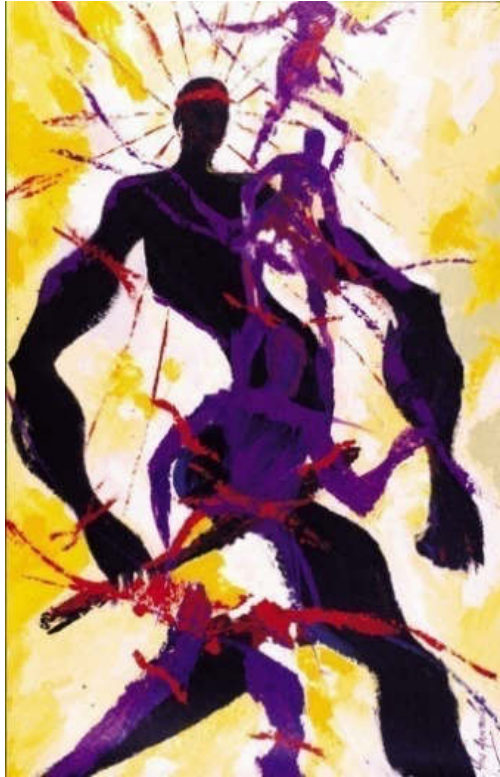


Fig. 20

Yisa Akinbolaji (2013). *Robotic Dance*. Acrylic on canvas. Size not indicated.

Courtesy of the artist.

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Remoglue is a philosophy of making, shaped by migration, memory and material innovation. Developed through years of experimentation, Remoglue transforms industrial adhesive into textured surfaces that evoke geological depth and emotional resonance. Remoglue is more than a material and medium: it is also a technique. This medium reflects the artist's integrated self: one who navigates displacement by turning unfamiliar substances into sites of meaning (Biographical Legacy and Research Foundation, n.d., Contemporary African Art, n.d.). Figure 21 shows the effect of Remoglue application. The adhesive

becomes autobiographical; a metaphor for the immigrant's capacity to bind fragments into coherence and beauty. Remoglue's sculptural quality within two-dimensional compositions challenges the boundaries of painting, allowing light, gesture, and color to interact in dynamic ways. This tension between surface and depth, between painting and sculpture, reveals a praxis conflict: a negotiation between inherited forms and emergent possibilities. In this light, Remoglue is not just a material strategy but a dialectical resolution. It affirms that art, like identity, is shaped by what it survives and what it transforms.



Fig. 21

Yisa Akinbolaji (2009). *Door to Future*. Acrylic on canvas. Size not indicated.

Courtesy of the artist.

## **Conclusions**

This study has adopted the conscious and unconscious art praxis conflict determinant approaches, which are subsumed in the Personalism and dialectical theories. The approaches looked at art conflict as stemming from artist's visual portrayal, or imageries of awareness-propelled and non-awareness-propelled praxis conflict. The determination of unique and universal poles of praxis conflict was based on peculiar conflicts experienced by the artist within at least two different contexts. One, the artist evolves by exploring different avenues available to them. And two, while the artist strives to explore, innovate and invent, experiences of conflict in thought and production processes are inescapable. The manifestations of such conflicts are reflected in what they produce. In many of these diaspora painters' evolutionary stages, they are not just a case study in artistic change. They are a lived testimony to how conflict (whether personal, cultural and/or historical) can become the very ground from which new meaning grows.

More importantly, this evolution reflected in a couple of an artist's works that are sometimes not reflective of the already established praxis mannerism of the artist. It turns out like a visual expression that is fleeting, experimental and momentary. This, in essence, is some kind of praxis conflicts experienced by eleven artists studied. When the conflict causality element outweighs the pleasure and resources from the art and the process of painting, the painter takes up his or her new protective shell, sometimes with displeasure that cannot be overridden.

Nonetheless, a major contributory factor to the advancement of diaspora art is praxis conflict. This is largely influenced by the multicultural spatial environment as the basic prompter of conflict. The diaspora domain is a fertile breeding place for hybridism and conflicts, which the eleven Diaspora painters studied have explored in various ways to their advantages. This has eventually led to remarkable changes in many of their paintings and their other practices.

It is obvious, but also normal, that the creative mind may be all-time stable when praxis challenges occur, but the eleven artists tried in

several creative ways to overcome them. This study demonstrated that creative decisions could be altered if conditions surrounding earlier ones changed. Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that despite an artist's creative position and development, output would eventually change, owing to the acceptance or rejection of some of the affective conditions. However, a principle that has been established through the foregoing is that, whatever changes that occur in the products of an artist, they can be determined from praxis conflict perspective and, if understood, can assist artists in quick and brilliant resolution of praxis conflicts and can also determine trajectories of artist's developments that scholars can interrogate. This is relatively recent perspective in the study of the Visual Arts and artists, which we explored and which provided good parameters to interpret both awareness-propelled and non-awareness-propelled praxis and evolution of artists and their arts.

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