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‘Many Lamps Same Light’: The Stained Glass Paintings of Nigeria’s Prime Artists, Y.C.A. Grillo and D. H. Dale

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Abstract

‘Many lamps same Light’ investigates the place of agency in the transmutation of indigenous imageries in the art works of the pictorial turn. Through an investigation that entailed an empirical analysis of the works of two Nigerian prime stained glass artists, Yusuf Grillo and David Dale, this study established that in spite of their diversity in picture making tooling mechanisms, both artists met the purposes of the “new thinking” paradigm shift in the post Vatican II evangelisation regime. In a hermeneutic discourse, however, the study investigates Grillo’s exclusive use of indigenous thought systems’ imbued lexiconology as visual tooling mechanisms to affect imagery for the episteme of ecclesia in Africa. In effect that novel art form did not only affect the enlargement of the series in images of this, otherwise, European art form but also a change in imagery in the entire constellation of Church art. In fact, through art as agency utilising the iconographical imageries from Nigeria as ciphers of the pictorial turn, distinguishing the paradigm shift in Christianity, it was possible to tell the Christos story with Christ as the magnate holding the ecclesiologies together.

Key words: stained glass, pictorial turn, evangelisation, iconographical imagery, tooling mechanism, agency, light, lamp

Introduction

Nigerian stained glass paintings of the 1960s church, distinctive in iconographical imageries, reflective of *the pictorial turn*; were purposefully created to meet the imperatives of a spectacular representation of the central tenets of Faith: evangelisation to inflect the truths of the Good News; the centrality of the Paschal mysteries and the Redemption of Calvary on which ethos the Christian Faith is hinged (P.C. Chibuko, 2006). Little wonder that these peculiar imageries signaled a new dawn in Christendom; effecting the cultural values and the ideological underpinnings in *ecclesia* in Africa. With unique imageries, these pictures are emblematic of Christendom's look at the emergent "new world order" and the places of future sojourn. It is significant, therefore, to recognise the imprint of the new *ecclesia in Africa* liberalisms and new Church teachings, from the Catholic Christian point of view (John Paul II, 1995). In that guise a reflection on the cultural values that the artists, Yusuf Grillo and David Dale invested in their images, draws attention to their place at meeting the purposes of the new evangelisation. A critical analysis of the works of these masters, reveals the *raison d'être* for the progressive acceptance of a uniquely Nigerian typology in the styles of the art form is directed. Such an approach to the historiography of Christian artifacts serves to enrich its' traditional status as part of the cultural history of ideas imbued in the Faith by associating it with the notions of discourse analyses. I take the view, therefore, that Nigerian glass draws attention to notions of progress in the historiography of Christian art.

Grillo and Dale, draw attention to *vernacularisation* of meaning and a novel way of expressing the biblical stories in paintings. Their works deploy forms that reflect symbolic expressions of (i) the Nigerian cultures from which their imageries were drawn; and (ii) distinctive expressions of a new style in Christendom's art, purposive and novel to signify the paradigm shift in Christianity (Giuseppe Alberigo, 2006) The novelty that these imageries spin is of importance to stained glass as an artifact that situates the new Christian ecclesiology. However, the Nigerian paintings constituted an elongation of an extended series in the further development and growth of the, otherwise, European art form. Nigerian visual narratives present a history of the Bible and the doctrines of the Faith, echoing Vatican II's dictum of liberalism, assimilation and culturalisation paradigm directed at "catching the population" of believers in the new evangelisation. Significant as it is, that paradigm shift emerged on the tapestry of the nationalist politics of nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. The Council of the most coeval institution in Western society expressed its new directions in her most spectral of art forms, the stained glass. The Catholic creed in its conspicuous liturgy that effects a ritualistic consumption of art endorsed a new art form. Consequently that

art form signified the breaking of the Hegelian imperialist monocle that dominated the mainstays of the discourse of art and its history. That Council challenged Hegelian philosophy of history with its purposive narratives that suited the teleological tendencies of an overarching discursive practice in art history (Keith Moxey, 1998). This paper argues, instead, that the ecclesiastic glass of the 1960s debunks such an analogy. Hence, Ecclesiastic glass was the *defacto* communicational paradigm through which the intentions, values and the ideological directions in Church evangelisation culture, were conveyed to the peoples of the world in the 1960s. These formal changes affected the Faithfull's perceptions of the Biblical stories that were formerly conveyed by the old glass. The creations of Grillo and Dale were emblematic of that peculiar era of change in the Church.

A formal sequential juxtaposition of the art works of Grillo and Dale, in effect, show them as markers of difference from the Imperial style glass. In that regard it is the purpose of this paper to draw attention to the notions of the semantic densities of the art works of each artist as reflective of different ways of expressing the purposive intentions of the Church. In fact, a critical look at the elusive stratagems of these artists as overarching mechanisms at making the break from imperial images, are examined. However, an extensive commentary on the works of Grillo underscores a reflection on the possibilities for the expression of the biblical Stories in an entirely indigenous *oeuvre* within the mainstays of one Nigerian culture. Such commentaries deepen our appreciation of the artist's thinking processes, techniques and even an appreciation of the tools and mechanisms that are engaged in the picture making processes.

These Lagos artists engage distinctive imageries drawn from within the corpus of Nigeria's cultural environment. That environment is enhanced by the visual culture implicit in story-telling traditions; and her world of art, crafts, body and architectural decoration traditions. However, Dale in a most profound way deepens his iconographical detours by a universalisation of imagery. Dale goes beyond the Nigerian art world, basking thereof to the larger art world to *create a community, which literally affects the truism of universalisation: oikumene* (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1986). In a critical look at the *oeuvre* of each artist on the themes in specific pictures; puts the creations of these masters in an analogy that **shows** that (a) the paintings represent different approaches of visual narratives, (b) in spite of their difference, the artistic feats are poised at telling the same biblical stories; and (c) one inflects a deliberate indigenisation of subject matter; whereas the other achieves both an indigenisation regimen, and added cultural capital in a universalisation, never before attempted in the entire constellation. Thusly, the artists made the visible legible utilising different lamps in spreading the GoodNews, the light!

Each artist begins with the virtue of tenacity and fidelity to the *Holy write*. Grillo sought recourse in his creolised *Egba-Brazilian* roots. Dale retorted to the very

western canonic art that the new ecclesiology had hitherto disentangled from. Daring and resourceful, both artists had the audacity to think anew the reupholster for the Church's most distinctive spectacle, the stained glass. Lastly, perhaps greatest of all, the corpus met the needs of the Church; and the reception of both elite and ordinary folks in the emergent congregations. To set the stage, an empirical analysis of the distinctive creations of each artist, appropriate for the acquaintance of the reader with the Subject, is engaged.

David Dale: St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Race Course, Lagos

Dale's prime work, the St. Saviour's Anglican Church altar lancets (Fig. 1) presents the classic of modern stained glass manufacture. The images are all rendered in mimetic representation, direct and most readable to all viewers. Stubbornly European in mimetic representations; Dale remained self-conscious of the European masters that he admired. However, in conversation, he revealed the choice inclusion of Nigerian style decorative imagery with roulette bands as defining borders adapted from men's clothing embroidery in specific alternate panels. Employing geometricisation as a model for the recalibration of imagery, Dale simulates embroidery patterns of the Yoruba *Agbada* and the Hausa *Baban Riga* (Figs. 4). These abstract Mathematical imageries are deployed in alternate panels in the windows (David H. Dale, 2012).

In the rest of the seven panels, Dale tells the story of the Christos and the Paschal mysteries. Employing gestures and devices of illustration, his figurations are flat and contoured, graphic and Print-maker fashion; in shapes that inflect drapery folds. Floral imageries culled from decorative floral motifs commonplace in Nigerian fabrics are reduced to flat shapes, all to emphasise the main story theme: the risen Christ with emphatic hallow symbol cresting his head in full glory, triumphant with arms raised in eternal bliss. The knelling angels (Fig. 4) are deliberately presented in Egyptian art style flat profile views; and the bottom half of the bodies defined in contours. The wings are expressed as petals to compliment the vegetal shapes. The same techniques of visual analogy are employed in the other lancet window (Figs. 5).

With deliberate academic bent, Dale utilises geometric symbolisms, Circles and Triangles as the mainstays of his *repertoire* of imageries. In spite of bringing the past into the present in allegories that are quintessentially African; Dale's oeuvre is rooted in African picture making canons that transcend the mere simulation of known iconographies ascribed to traditional Church pictures. Emphatic flat plains strengthened by formal Print making organisation transcend the Western canon yet revalidates them, while giving the viewer a fresh breath. Graphic outlined grids define and simulate mimetic proportions as "fractals" which they project. Nigerian art world imageries, for example, floral motifs culled from the crafts of Textile design and wall decorations commonplace in Yoruba and Hausa traditions are adapted as composition elements. These are simulated in flat shapes and incorporated in the composition. In

spite of the canons of his education in Zaria; Dale's work emphasises a flexibility that makes them not only visibly Nigerian in content, but faithfully tell the biblical stories. Emphasising the primacy of both process and that keen composition characteristic of classical art works; David relentlessly seeks the marriage of original conceptual thoughts rendered in drawing's formal completeness in production.

For example, deploying mathematical symbols, he abstractly creates the simulations of Nigerian embroidery imagery. In this same picture, Dale utilises commonplace combinations of vegetal motifs, such as the palm. Vegetals are regular pictorial and decoration archetypes drawn from Nigerian Textile and Clothing decoration styles. The same motifs, linearly rendered, are popular in architectural wall decoration designs in traditional Nigerian architecture. These motifs are also found in handcrafts decorations. Examples abound in Calabash, Leather works and even in decorations popular in cicatrisation and body marking traditions. These choices make the paintings more Nigerian, hence more acceptable. His colour choices, rich in primary and analogous hues are neither hot nor sharp; but deliberately mellow, typical print maker resolutions. Colour is engaged to induce the atmosphere of prayerful benediction and adoration. Dale's reticent line analysis readily resonate the everyday reality in simple uncomplicated easy characterisations. These applaud the serenity and reality of the simple but spiritual heartiness of Nigerian life in tangible discernible forms and shapes.

Deliberate engagement with space as ground defines and projects his motifs, thusly, creating the illusion of embeddedness in the compositions. Dale simulates the art traditions of ancient Nigeria, some of these are still in popular use. One such deployment is the Benin bas relief technique employed in the embossment and epoxy resin methods of metal sculpture decoration. This is the method employed to create the impression of the 'emergent pigeons' in the lintel image in a door way frame. In fact, the pigeons seem to be in perpetual flight. Engaging such a technique, the image of the dove is tactile in its bas relief projection. These methods employed by the artist are not a mere commentary on the use of obsolescence. These variations of Nigerian heritage artistry situate the new evangelisation in Nigerian culture and modernist art.

Yusuf Grillo: All Saints Anglican Church, Yaba, Lagos

Distinctive in the **All Saints** windows is the boldly outlined grids that define and simulate mathematical proportions as "fractals". Grillo emphasises a preoccupation with geometric principles in the alignment of shapes within the picture space. Flatness is the distinctive character; emboldening the silhouette cartoons employed to draw attention to the departure from canonic forms. Thus, skillfully avoiding any reminders of the popular themes and styles of European glass, Grillo imprints the modern in Christendom's glass. The painting medium is traditional stained glass colour on Plexiglas substrates. Tin-lead holds the glass pieces in place, while the

steel comes aide the carriage that divide sectional weights.

Celebration, two huge windows, is unique in Grillo's paintings (Fig. 2). Made entirely of glass, in fact, scavenged glass from stockiest's waste heaps, especially Dizengoff's, the German export glass agency (now defunct). Copper foil as a casing material is absent in sections of *Celebration*. All glass pieces are glued together, uneven spaces between each section of glass is filled in utilising a mixture of silicone adhesive and black Universal stain, all blended in white filler to create a permanent grout mix. The mosaics of grouted units (and a glass appliqué technique, similar to fabric appliqué also employed) of the composition create the fantasies and abstractions in sections of the pictures. Picture patterns emerge from small snaps of materials; then sewn onto a larger piece. With this, colorful mosaic-like fancy imageries emerged for corner piece sections. Such accidental fractal imageries, "unconscious flows", independently became part of the artist's palette. Grillo revealed, in conversations, that in spite of the dominant drummer motif and its attendant silhouettes in serial repeats in this altarpiece, large sections of the picture were a result of the grouting and appliqué techniques employed in their creation (Y.C.A. Grillo, 2012).

Dominant cartoons silhouettes play out in seamless montages across the rectilinearly divided rhomboid sections of the picture's ensemble (Fig. I). However, two crosiers positioned as opposite shapes together force a middle rhomboid shape that "announces" the central theme of this painting: Good News All Are God's Works in God's World; weighty words and images that repeat aloud the deft business sense of the caricatured characters. In an almost cinematographic turn, the giant drummer figure is surmounted water-mark like on a montage of *Adire-eleko* derived blues. That photographic image, almost "surrealist", radically arrests all beholders. Viewers are forcefully drawn to this jarring eye-opening reality: a dialogic engagements rather than a mimetic recount of the actions in the pictorial space.

However, another cartoon character in an elaborately decorated *Kaftan* is included. With the *kaftan*, it is fascinating to witness how Grillo has smuggled in an internationalising agency (the *Kaftan* is native to Arabian Middle-east; now made international by economic trade and geo-political migrations to Africa and the rest of the world) to intuit the universality of the Christian message. That imagery points to the ecclesial truths of spreading the Word to all mankind. Also included in the schema are a variety of crosses. However, the entire accessory is skillfully framed with the peculiar *grilloesque* mathematically crafted ensemble of rhomboids. A brilliant analogous harmony of colours flows within these linear intersections. With colour, line and his peculiar notions of harmony, Grillo enacts entire epiphanies. In this simulacra gaze, the emotions and spiritual consciousness of persons doing commerce in the church space are cajoled with the play of melodies and harmonies in rhythmic abandon. With these, Grillo creates volumes and recessions, the music of the spheres, in the re-

enactments of the peculiar effect of transcendental presence.

Yusuf Grillo: St. Dominic's Catholic Church, Yaba, Lagos

Crafted in Plexiglas, this art work expresses Nigerian iconographical elements in a photographic representation *vivre* (Fig.2). The silhouette is adapted to a water-colour rendering with graphically defined images of principal personas of Church history. Each unit of the composite picture is somberly lit in analogous colours within a formal grid system. The art work is made up of two giant shapes: A rhomboid dominated by twelve giant petals, these sunflower-like flutter around a central circle in which a white dove silhouette floats perpetually in eternal bliss. In each of these petals giant iconographical Christian motifs: varied cross shapes, the anchor, the sacred heart; and even an Imperial cross in a crown of thorns; all sit on cut-out fabric print roulette patterns. With these silhouettes in petal *simulacrum* of the sunflower; the dove motif stays in eternal flight in the middle circle.

Green, symbolic *terra firma*, is employed to emphasise stability and balance. Green has a positive valence as an emblem of life. It is a product of the collaboration between yellow and blue. These two colours together with red constitute the triad of primary colours. Green stands for vegetation and a symbol of calmness and cool disposition. Grillo aligns green with red as complimentary in a mythical exposition of this picture. In spite of a quintessential painterly style, Grillo exploits Yoruba Textile and Clothing, important cultural artifacts; to define concepts of beauty, humanity, culture and proper social relations. Cloth draws its strength as a metaphor from its use as a powerful expressive medium in Yoruba life. Grillo's simulation of imagery from the *Creole* world is subtle, reticent in its assemblage, but significant at achieving culturalisation of imagery for the Church's purposes.

A rectangular stained glass unit made up of four smaller rectangular units is the second giant shape. These units are horizontally aligned. Each unit contains mimetic images that choreograph the Dominican Order's vows: Obedience, Service, Humility and Continenence. A crucifix is located in the center panel. The St. Dominic's art work is, therefore, made up of a giant rhomboid unit that fits snugly atop a horizontally aligned rectangular unit. Grillo's works suggest grounding in the Mathematical sciences; palpably conveyed in all his creations. This has shaped the planar relationships that characterise his work. John Sims (2004) referred to this commonplace tendency in African artistry as "Math Art". It is a dynamic system that undergirds both structure and beauty in Grillo's work. Grid of structures usually support his art work, constituting their foundation along with a colour scheme that appear as coordinates in complementary and analogous relationships. Grillo's preoccupation with culture and the numerical principle remains the pillar of strength in all his works. Hence the elegant and beautiful emerge concretely and usually through the voice of the physics of nature. It is the dynamics that tie together structure and

beauty; the spiritual, the quantitative and the elegant.

The vertical formats of the pictures in this Church reflect Grillo's transposition of imageries and colour palette from regular painting canvass ground. The overall intensity of the now familiar signature Blue, lights up the background with impressionistic freshness. This fills up the, otherwise, somber clerestory void. The rest of the picture is a sketch pad geometric exercise in the alignment, balance and counter alignment of varied sizes of rectangular picture planes. In fact, the art historian and critic, C.O. Adepegba in the book *Nigerian Art, Its Traditions and Modern Tendencies*, stressed Grillo's simple figure compositions typified by elongated and geometrised forms with long necks and narrow heads (C.O. Adepegbe, 1995). Yusuf Grillo's peculiar simulation of *Adire eleko* blue flows freely water colour-like in an admixture of rich red and a splinter of various analogous colours. This is the master's knitting mechanism for the myriad of planes in the composition. In spite of the lead comes that boldly define the geometric rhomboid planes, the palette colours simply flow like many streams flowing to make one river, the picture.

Grillo seems to have developed an aligned intellectual, almost religious concern for the female figure. This freshly immediacy in the exploration of form in the now distinctive *grilloesque* painting style remains a fascination. In fact, the feminine attired Nigerian figure is a theme the master has utilised in the interrogation of his unique pictorial geometrician analysis, and the explication of painting themes. That interrogation is the dominant style that is transferred to glass. Looking at the Yaba windows, the viewer is simply reminded of the treatment of the figure in some other picture, *Yoruba Bride* (Fig.). Aligned in a portrait stance, the figure engages space in a pyramidal relationship to the entire Picture Space. A deliberate lineal segmentation of the Picture Space creates the composition. This precise rendering in planes eventually defines the entire forms, with details created within defined rhomboid and curved shapes.

This special treatment of the human figure, even its silhouettes, in its structural foundation drawn from a mathematical resolution of forms while an enduring characteristic of all his works, has also assumed the status signature of the master. That signature emphasises a perception of the resolution of forms in mathematical paradigms, as the first condition for the celebration of elegance and the beautiful in his works. Grillo's mathematical art preoccupation comfortably lodges him well in the grounds as the Senegalese modernist artist, Papa Ibra Tall, engaged in the ideological cultural renaissance discussed in *In Senghor's Shadow* (Elizabeth Harney, 2004). Though each individual artist's subject matter is different, both men adopted the cipher of Mathematics to project their modernist artistic modes of expression.

Reflections on the Artists and their Works

David H. Dale

In a modernist print maker *vivre*, Dale approaches his works historically. Hence, a perpetual metamorphosis of forms is an endearing feat in his creations. Keen on meeting the demands of the '*pictorial turn*', he effects a displacement of canonic European forms and their metaphors in deliberate re-threads with the "artist stores" inherited forms. As a result his works bear the traces of the first generation glass within which they readily find their serial links. For example, the Saint Saviours¹⁰ lancets, not only clothes the sensibilities of the European glass from which they stem but also awakens a new consciousness of the times. Dale's art is directed to the intelligential, not the run of the mill church-goers. His work is a grand ensemble, united by close reasoning by dint of coherent experiments and Techniques culled from the Print world. Hence, the identities of the European forms are preserved, but their quality is transfigured according to the artist's techniques, materials, tools and the peculiarities of his hand. Dale keeps all his forms afloat on an imaginary void or sky-line reminiscent of imagery in textile stills and design. On this illusionary ground the graphic enveloping lines around each figure project themselves in each picture. Dale borrowed from 'antiquity of world art'; combined this with Nigerian visual elements to give the final work universality. Thusly, the faithful can communicate with these spectacles irrespective of time and place. With varied techniques he anticipates a World spiritual family. His work echoes the reminiscences of Henri Focillon emphasising a kind of spiritual ethnography that unites the best profiled races of mankind.¹¹ Keen techniques drawn from the Print Making trade, under his peculiar hand presents works that reflect a living Word in a universal language. The viewer, therefore, sees and recognises the new interpretation against the background of the other glass. This constitutes the imaginary museum of the viewer. Such a work speaks to both the educated elite in the local church, and the world, out there!

Decorative ciphers of the '*pictorial turn*' simulated as symbolisms and decorative elements commonplace in Nigerian flora, Hausa *Baban Riga* and *Hula*, Yoruba *Agbada* and *Fila*; Yoruba *Adire eleko*, Itsekiri *George* and even *Nsibidi*; but specifically ornamental patterns are entire picture making mechanisms in his art work. A surfeit of floral arabesques inspiration, are entirely recast and coloured by the artist's technical interests. Ornamental floral elements in silhouettes are further employed as *bandanas* to define and tie in each panel unit. In fact, through keen analysis and exact interpretation of forms, shapes and symbolisms resultant imageries speak to the viewers in a language that not only deepens the Good News; but makes it "more at home" (Henry Focillon, 1996).

St. Saviour's, distinctively interrogates formal relationships that deepens its certain index value, making up its repertory, its vocabulary. Proportionality derived

from concise mathematical measure is the mark of this master. Dale's techniques override the known traditions in stained glass making. This gives his work its tonality. For example, the choice of Opalescent glass in St. Ann Church, Maryland, Lagos as substrate was deliberate. This texturization of elements induces type and archetype imageries to enhance additional glitter to the painted glass surface. This intellectual simulation of material substrates, in spite of its almost mechanical application, is the artist's means of affecting the central purpose of the stained glass tradition: the flow of heavenly light, the light of God. Dale, thus, empathises with the "miraculous", for the light admitted by this sacred window (Hugh Honour & J. Fleming, 2009).

Yusuf Grillo

A deliberate afro-centricism inspired by the iconography of *the creolisational* Lagos roots of his birth, upbringing and socialization grounds Grillo's prime creation All Saints Church ambulatory lancets (Fig. 2). The paintings speak to the awakened consciousness of the ordinary man in the pews. Two caricatures as key local metaphors is the center from which the story radiates. Grillo emphasises *Adire eleko* pit dye schemes coupled with representational figuration simulated from a transfiguration of commonplace imagery to stimulate the feel of the Good News. That surrender to the power of an indigenous thought system, not colonial, suggests a rigorous afro-centricism that informs distinct *creoleness* in his works.

Grillo engages the fundamental principles of play, the deployment of select locale symbolisms, and the experience of Yoruba celebration in the visualisation of biblical stories; to meet the *pictorial turn* with a sortie of Yoruba theatre, storytelling ploys and folklore. In that guise, he employed *Egba-cum Brazilian creole* imageries to affect an intimacy with the faithful and the public at large. The "drummer" and the "kaftan" caricatures are the most distinctive of his imageries. These in their print-maker style repeats are swarmed in a peculiar mix of *Adire Eleko* derived colours in *Celebration* (Fig. 1). With these motifs, Grillo achieved a brilliant indeginisation of the Good News in both traditional glass and Persplex. People are able to identify these familiar imageries, hence, become participant observers in the event. This is the hermeneutic identity that Grillo employed to meet the exegetes of the *ecclesia in Africa* paradigm. With these the art work draws the Faithful, to a spiritual and intellectual engagement on the scaffolding of the theatrical and the folkloric as tooling mechanisms in *Celebration*. These picture elements are further playfully presented in monochromatic silhouette repeats in an intricate interplay of showing and concealment, Print-maker style in the painting. Grillo's geometrics and *Adire Eleko* derived sensuous color schemes are the epiphanies of beauty that affect the image turn in *the paradigm shift*. *Celebration* by dint of its live-context (it is located in a specific ambulatory space that it has helped to shape) invites the faithful and viewers to dwell upon her. In concert with effective lighting, the accompaniment of Music, and Choral singing customary in

Liturgical engagements the celestial is conjured.

Capturing the celestial in a spectacle, that ineluctably utilised cultural symbols as capital to project the authority and symbolism of the new **ecclesiology**; the Church emphasised artistic means of hoisting her strategic tomes of progressivism. **The**, otherwise, commonplace imageries transfigured in the works significantly canonised a style that derived its peculiar idioms from indigenous themes, motifs and symbolisms. The legacy and identity of Nigerian glass as ecclesiastical art finds its provenance and authenticity in this episteme. Authentic church art remained, a prototype inspired by the episteme in Christendom's foundations of knowledge; scripted in liturgical documents such as the Catholic Church's *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigerian Response* (J.O. Ogujiafor & I. Enweh, (1966).

It is, therefore, pertinent to recognise the aesthetic regime of the locale *Egba cum Diasporas* cultural heritage in Grillo's work as grounding for the appreciation of his response to the challenges of modernity. Modernity for Grillo was channeled through a culture of radical politics hoisted on creative radicalism with appropriations from *creolisation* Yoruba cultural identity as its focus. Grillo was steeped in European art history. Drawing inspiration from the European masters of choice, therefore, he borrowed freely from kindred spirits. A formidable intertextuality reflects borrowings from traditions in European art, for example, Dutch Still-Life; and the subtle impressionisms of the Bauhaus painters, especially the American Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956) are evident (E.H Gombrich, 2012). The critiquing of Grillo's creations, formation and study falls within the purview of the art historians and critiques. Engaged in the transformation of indigenous *realia* to modern art, Grillo engaged African art with its humanistic and serenely spiritualising aura as the ready resort for that transformation.

The conceptual themes of this discourse and the experiences of Yoruba celebration, fuse the concepts of play and the visual imagery to nigerianise the paintings. Grillo takes his imagery from the *creole* art world, readily transmittable in a way that alludes to their function in real life. For example, he deploys cartoons to reflect and symbolise both myth and the enactment of the popular panegyric of "*thanks-giving and gratitude for a favor*" in the Yoruba every day. The Yoruba, sophisticated and urbane, are remarkable in their partiality for feasting, *Igbadun*, the imperative for enjoyment of life and its events. Grillo identified the idea of community in Yoruba experience of celebration as the bringing of the individual and the community together! Simulating Yoruba notions of the social nature of Praise and its temporality, he affects the theological dimensions of a coming together of the faithful under the aegis of the spectral. He deploys the imagery of the "thing" itself, the drummer and the *kaftan* clad characters; to enact the commonplace for the purposes of a simulation.

Looking at the panoply of images in the Nigerian stained glass corpus, Yusuf

stands tall in a unique class of his own in the utilisation of colour to buttress the spiritual and abstraction in thought and imagery. Colours materialise in conscious coordinated relationships undergirded by the master's peculiar numerical thinking. The most distinct feature of iconography in his creations is the peculiar *grilloesque silhouette* figure characterised by elongated neck-carrying polar heads usually positioned center-stage on defined spaces to add to their allure as images in a story series. These unique forms and shapes are robustly swarmed in his legendary use of *Adire-eleko* derived cool colours. The symbols, together, swarmed in the *grilloesque Adire Eleko* derived colours play out notions of the encounter with the immortal. This is the essence of *Celebration*, 1962.

In the typical existential notions of Yoruba everyday life, celebration, *ijo ifajji*, is a moment distinctively cut off from the rush of the typical everyday activities of work and labour in traditionally agrarian pursuits. However, as urban settlers, they distinguish "occasions" of celebration with colorful attires, agog with drumming, choral music, fanfare; and gathering together of the folks, away from the usual rush of everyday work and entrepreneur engagements. Grillo brings the distinctiveness of African notions of "gathering together" of a people to affect Christian *ecclesia*: gathering together for the occasion of the liturgy. That sense of community with emphasis on its peculiarities in representation simulates *creolised* notions onto the hallowed representation of Christendom's theological truths.

With reticence *Celebration* plays down memory lane in the spirit of a Mnemosyne. The knack for a spiritual reflection of the Christos story is perceived as a re-enactment of the European stained glass in the spectral of an African renaissance that is unique and modern. The creative artist with the prime epiphany of God finds a flowering of beauty drawn from the sap of *Africanite*, precisely from the mystery of the Incarnation. That wonder and good in the mystery of the Christ has even inspired mankind's creativity to unveil the fullness of the Christos story even in varied images and colours (John Paul II, 1999). Thusly, *ecclesia* presents fresh representations that incorporate the art of the past along with traditions of art drawn from the places of the new evangelisation. Such art works produced for the consumption of bourgeois religion finds its effect in an admixture of art and ritual. The art work challenges the viewer to do two things: (a) reminisce on the Story but (b) reflect a dialectic spontaneous fulfillment of the ecclesial moment. Taking imageries from their own cultures for the "gathering together" of the faithful, the creative artist affirmed that the values enshrined in the liberal tenets of faith inspired his work. However, that paradigm establishes a sure dialectics of space and time, the synchronic and the diachronic. The synchronic draws attention to the simultaneous coexistence of the past images in the life of the present one. Imaginatively this can be visualised as a vertical line that expresses the axis of time along which the changes are ordered. At the same token, a successive reenactment of the Story in a series of images never attained before in the constellation.

In fact, taking its life from the here and now, the diachronic dimension is achieved *via* a novel African modernist paradigm.

“The Shock of the New”

The shock in images presented to the Faithful and the larger *ecclesia* the most sophisticated spectral of man’s growth in both faith and its art (Ben Shahn, 1982). *Celebration* (Fig. 1) and *St. Dominic’s* (Fig. 2) are Grillo’s seminal creations for the *paradigm shift* of the 1960s. In rich *grilloesque* colours and resplendent eloquence, these pictures speak to the people of Nigeria and the World. In stark imagery and colour, they speak to the viewer in ways that words cannot express. Spectacular in its speechlessness, this encounter of the Story its novelty forces intimacy in mute eloquence. Resplendent in Still-Life painting (Gombrich, 2012). Grillo metaphorically utilised local imageries as representation of the momentous events of the Good News. The self-representation residing in these visual elements reflect the iconography of “the shock of the new” in stained glass. In several repeats of the two principal motifs in swarms of *Adire-eleko* Blues splashed with a touch of Lavender; Grillo’s paintings capture mortality, evanescence and transience within the picture. The preferences for these giant life-size *trompe l’oeil* silhouettes in particular, in spite of the forest of symbols commonplace in real life; as distinctive and vibrating rhomboids, are suggestive of the real thing: excitement and joy in the air! The figures suffused by waves of sound that arise from them, weave garlands of dancing notes and accolades suggestive of real life occasion; invoke music. This invokes the essence of *Celebration* itself as a picture worthy of place in church service and worship. In the *St. Dominic’s*, however, *Adire-eleko* is put Print-maker fashion as ground on which select liturgical and ecumenical motifs are embedded as life-like embossments. Only ephemeral shapes and colour remain as visual music that addresses the viewers in the speechless language of this modern picture. Grillo’s pictorial idioms were not intended to undermine the stained glass of European vintage. These new imageries symbolise the ideological and doctrinal foundations of the new evangelisation. In this subtle speechlessness, Grillo lit up the typological road to modernity!

Conclusion

Grillo’s and Dale’s paintings were exemplars of Christendom’s episteme of liberalism and openness, specifically in the use of other imageries in Church art. The Nigerian *genre*, however, draws attention to the peoples’ engagement in that epochal milestone in church art (Donald Preziosi, 2009). That stylistic inversion of church art, at the instance of the new evangelisation project, strengthened the momentous *pictorial turn* in Church art and its history by affecting a change in the balance of art and evangelisation culture. In this guise, it is significant to note the narration of a revivalist indigenous aesthetic in the practice. This is a contemporary context of militant ethnicity. In fact, revivalist aesthetics as deployed by Grillo reflects a specific regime

for the identification and reflection on art's role in the production of an intellectual culture. Revivalist aesthetics as deployed here underscores the place of agency or thought system indigenous, not colonial; imbued lexicology in visual tooling mechanisms.

Many Lamps, same Light investigated the modern artists attempt at accepting a tradition while defying it through innovation. In that vein, it made legible the visible ways that the artists pursued the task of reupholstering art. However, through an evaluation of the works of Dale and Grillo, it established how in spite of diversity, artists conjoined to promote a 'new thinking' for Christendom. Their experiments and variations of imagery were unique to the closely knit, concrete, but highly diversified art worlds that inspired them. Dale demonstrated that even with his euro centricism, the identical forms while maintaining their dimensions enriched their quality according to the material and the schema of tools at the artist's disposal. By dint of his utilisation of the mechanisms and techniques of the Printer's trade, Dale inflicted a new form order onto the constellation of glass art. While borrowing from the "antiquity of world art", he combined this with Nigerian iconography to give the final work its virile diversity. In contrast, however, Grillo engaged in a synthesis of Western and Nigerian iconographies with emphasis on vernacularisation. Re-echoing Uche Okeke's dictum "*nku di na mba ne eghelu mba nni!*": a people's wood is their source of cooking fire", Igbo proverb (Pat. Oyelola, 2003). These works are specifically African and unmordern

The art works of *the pictorial turn* was prompted by the cultural imperatives of the post Vatican II Church. The history of art with its conjoined meanings (art and history) operating in autonomous steeds reflect each other's separateness. Art "thinks out" how time is delineated into knowable durations in Time as often as the artists deposit them. While History reveals the incidence in time that allowed such creations to be made. In the combined function, the historian is confronted with the art work as form which safeguards historical knowledge.⁴ That requires accounting for!. This is the value of the historiographical engagement. A future discourse would be directed at a reading of Nigerian iconographical imageries: as scaffolding for the narratives that the glass recites; and art's power as the framing mechanism of the "new thinking" Church..



Fig.1: Altar lancet window units, St. Saviour's Anglican Church, David Dale, Race Course, 2(1,470x256m), stained glass, 1990. © Uche James Iroha.

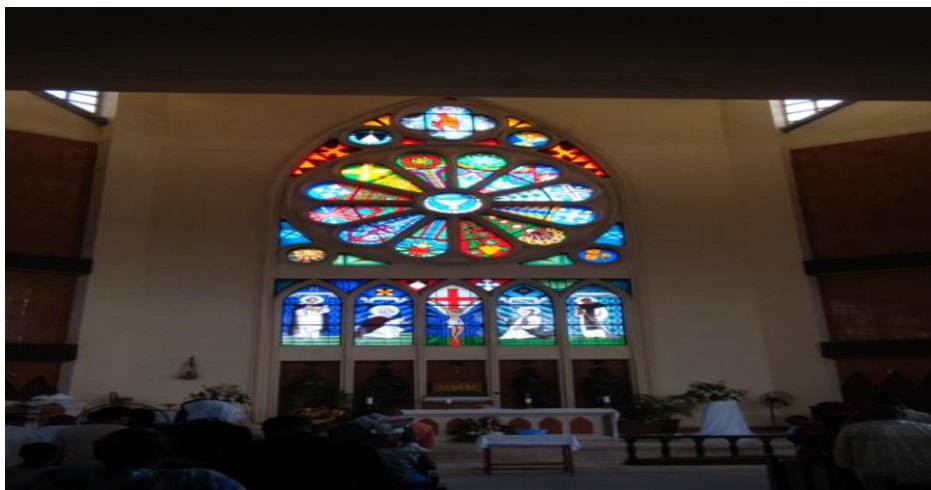


Fig. 2: *Celebration*, Yusuf Grillo, Glass and pigment, 214 x 334cm, 1962. © Nelson Graves.

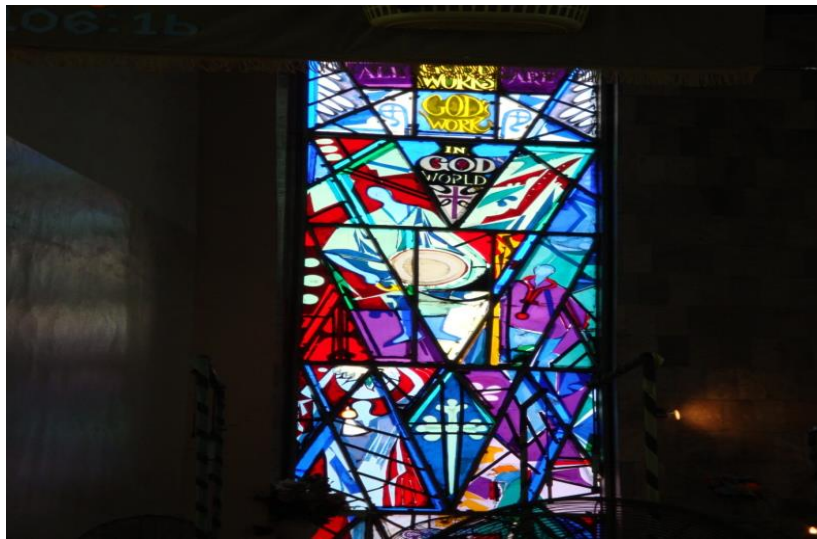


Fig. 3: *Stained glass Painting*, St. Dominic's Catholic Church Yaba, Lagos, Yusuf Grillo, plexiglas & pigment, 1360 x 680m, 1963. ©Nelson Graves.



Fig.5: St. Saviour's Anglican Church Racecourse, Lagos. Altar lancet window, Stained glass (147x256½cm), David Dale, 1990.

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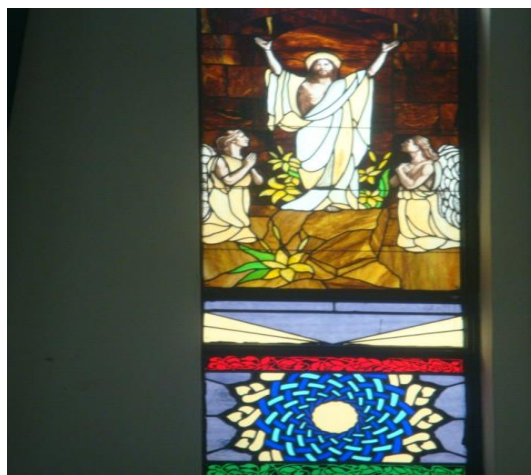


Fig. 4: St. Saviour's (detail: right panel behind altar) Church, Stained glass, (147x256½cm), David Dale, 1990.

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Vol. 19, Nos 3, Hampton University Press, Virginia, pp. 4-6. Grillo's preoccupation with Mathematics, especially geometry, is amply demonstrated in all his works. John Simms, artist and mathematician, alludes to inspiration drawn from Pythagorean foundations in Mathematics as key source of this very African *vivre*. Connections in Mathematics, nature and the arts are evident in the groundings. Simms dares to revitalize this awesome Pythagorean energy in contemporary context by combining the approaches of mathematical art, visual mathematics and ethnomathematics. The use of geometry to negotiate form is replete in ancient Mayan, Egyptian architecture, classical Greece and Modern Bauhaus. Grillo's work finds its ethos here.

Interviews

Dale, D.H. - A practicing Nigerian artist, print maker, stained glass maker and designer, interviewed in Akute, Ogun State, July 15, 2012.

Grillo, Y.C.A., a retired Teacher of Fine Arts, Yaba College of Technology, Interviewed in Ogundana Street, Ikeja, Lagos, September 9, 2012.