



Contemporary Perspectives on the Historic: Stone Sculptures of Oladapo Afolayan as Continuity and Development in the Trajectory of Nigerian Stone Art

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Abstract. Oladapo Afolayan's stone sculptures are contemporary by every qualification. However, he has built on far-reaching legacies of ancient stone art cultures that existed in Nigeria, such as Nok, Ile-Ife, Ekoi and Esie. The trajectory of stone art as it is found in Nigeria is traceable because the forms and styles are intact due to the durability of the medium of stone and because of its bulkiness, not many stone sculptures were lost to colonial looting and acquisition. Early explorers and historians like Leo Frobenius were reluctant to accept African human origin for many of these stone sculptures because of their sizes, quantity, quality, value and locations. These levels of aesthetic and technical sophistication may have challenged many contemporary artists to have shied away from attempting to replicate or resuscitate the mode of those works, albeit contemporarily, but not Oladapo Afolayan. He has, for over three decades, produced over 300 stone sculptures in various types of stone that can equal the past works in all dimensions. The artist's repertoire reflects the high dexterity, ingenuity and mastery of medium that can be observable in the historical stone works. By fieldwork consisting of mostly observations, interviews, photography and literature review, this study documented the stone sculptures of Oladapo Afolayan, and juxtapositions them with the ancient works to be able to establish his contemporary perspectives as a continuity and development of stone art in Nigeria. Oladapo Afolayan's practice, not only revives an enduring art form, but is also engaged in visual documentation of Nigerian history, creating material culture, training and mentoring future sculptors for the sustainability of stone-carving, and overall Nigerian art globally.

Keywords: Art History, Continuity, Development, Nigerian Sculpture, Oladapo Afolayan, Stone Art

1. Introduction

The oldest Nigerian art is recorded to be as old as *c.* 1500 B.C. – *c.* 500A.D. That is the Nok art culture which is made up of terracotta sculptures of animals and stylized human forms (Plate 1), pottery, iron tools, stone tools such as stone axes, and stone ornaments. Hence the appearance of stone as a medium of expression and function in Nigerian art, is as old as its art history. Stone art cultures existed in several places in Nigeria, especially in the south, and many of them have been historically acclaimed worldwide. Examples of such include:

- (a) 430 -450 Stone Monoliths in Ikom, Cross-River state (also known as Akwanshi, Ekoi, Atal, Alaptal) (*c.* 500 A.D. - *c.*900 A.D.) (Plate 2).
- (b) Granite Monoliths at Eshure Ekiti in Ekiti state (*c.*700A.D. – *c.*900 A.D.) (Plate 3)
- (c) 800-1000 Seated Soapstone Figures at Esie, Kwara state (*c.*1100 A.D.-1500 A.D.) discovered in 1775 and publicized in 1933 (Plate 4)
- (d) 18 feet Opa Oranmiyan Staff at Ile- Ife in Osun state (*c.* 1300 A.D.) (Plate 5)

Some qualities of these stone arts that have captivated the world include their quantity, as in the cases of the about 450 phallic monoliths scattered around 17 communities in Ikom and the about 1000 naturalistic seated human figures at Esie; and their size, like the 18 feet Staff of Oranmiyan in Ile-Ife. Also important to art history, is the significance of the forms and surface ornamentation to African oral history and as a link to the cultural past. For example, the scarifications and decorative markings on the Akwanshi (Plate 2) and Opa Oranmiyan (Plate 5) are believed by scholars (examples are Fagg and Plass, 1964, p.121; Willett, 1971, p.65; Drewal, H.J., Pemberton III, J., Abiodun, R., 1987, pp. 45 - 48; Agim,1995), to be inscriptions of an ancient writing

system, coded with information, yet to be deciphered. Despite the awe these works have created worldwide, many of these groups of carved stone monoliths are still lacking in holistic information on several aspects of their production, meanings and functions. For example, Allison (1968, p.61) in his investigations on Nigerian stone art could not access the knowledge of the techniques or methods used in executing the works and their human creators, due the secrecy shrouding the unusual art. Allison (1968, p. 131) also posited that African stone sculptures have not been given a position of peculiar importance in the history of Africa and its arts. The reluctance by the locals to accept human origins for these stone sculptures have also significantly hampered research and findings on several histories of the art forms (for many years Esie Soapstone sculptures were hypothetically believed to be divinely created or a result of humans that mysteriously turned to stone). According to the ethnographic surveys of Fagg and Plass (1964, p.121), stone was not widely used either in architecture or in sculpture in the areas where these sculptures existed, hence they may have functioned as spiritual or religious but certainly sacred icons. Presently the works have remained as they were found with no link to their host communities as there are no continued practice of producing such sculptures by the local inhabitants nor the continuity in their uses for any known function. Nevertheless, contemporary uses have been found for these objects in tourism, cultural and museum studies, ancestral worship, and community development. Oladapo Afolayan's initial foray into the tedious task of stone carving, according to him (Afolayan, 2020, personal communication), was not just only from interest but he also sought to give contemporary answers to several historic questions on the ancient stone forms. For example, that his stone sculptures can match the quality and quantity of the earlier works (Afolayan has produced about 300 stone sculptures during his over 30 years of art practice), erases all doubts of human origin for the ancient sculptures. The deliberate social function and impact of Afolayan's works also reveal that the earlier anonymous artists

were deliberate in creating those works for socio-cultural impact and for utilitarian purposes.

Oladapo Afolayan is not the only Nigerian contemporary sculptor who has ventured into stone carving successfully. Onwughalu and Onuoha (2004, p.23) mentioned one Chief Gbadamosi Olokuta, who was discovered in Osogbo in 1963 by the Osogbo Art Movement facilitated by Ulli Beier (b. 1922- d. 2011). Chief Olokuta had been carving stone since then in the style of Osogbo art, however his works have a restricted function because he belonged to Adunni Orisa's (Susan Wenger) Sacred Art Movement and carved only figures that represented Orisa deities. Another stone sculptor was Professor Krishnan, who was invited by Nigerian artist, Bruce Onobrakpeya, to revive stone carving in Nigeria. Through the 1990s, Professor Krishnan taught stone carving in Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo state, albeit the stone carving he taught was thematically, stylistically, formally and functionally contemporary. Even the tools, techniques, and technology were modern and had no remote relationship with Nigeria's past works. Paul Olorunfemi Abuade is also a contemporary stone sculptor who specializes in Marble as his medium. Trained at Yaba College of Technology and an Italian Marble Institute, he works privately in his studio in Lagos, Nigeria. Abuade works only on commissions which limits his practice and has made it difficult for him to mount exhibitions and expose his works to the world. In his interview (Guardian, Sunday February 14, 1987), he claimed to be reacting to the immense pressure that came with carving stone. According to Afolayan, stone-carving art and practice had actually died in Nigeria prior to his taking it up in 1985. His efforts at facilitating stone-carving at the annual series of Harmattan Workshops organized by Bruce Onobrakpeya, contributed to the revival of the art and practice. Many new stone sculptors are being trained annually and some of them are already in practice. Noteworthy is the role of Bruce Onobrakpeya in providing the space, fora, tools and equipment, and personnel to promote contemporary stone-carving (Oladapo Afolayan Interview, 2020).



PLATE 1 Nok Terracotta Head
Photo Credit: Google Arts & Culture



PLATE 2: *Stone Monolith*, Ikom, Granite 3.5ft
Photo Credit: Google Arts & Culture



PLATE 3: Guardian Figure,
42in, Eshure-Ekiti. Photo
Credit: Google Arts & Culture



PLATE 4: *Male Figure*, Soapstone, 3ft, Esie,
Photo Credit: Google Arts & Culture



PLATE 5: *Opa Oranmiyan*, Granite, 18ft, Ile-Ife
Photo Credit: Google Arts & Culture

2. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The methodology used in this study is an art-historical survey based on a purposive selection of Oladapo Afolayan for field investigation. The purposive selection of Oladapo Afolayan for this study depended on the following:

- (i) After over three decades of practice, the artist is presently the most prolific stone sculptor on the Nigerian art scene, with total number works about 300 stone sculptures to his credit. These works are distributed in private collections, gardens and galleries, public spaces, and also in public institutions globally. Since the discovery of Esie's over 800 soapstone sculptures, first in 1775 and publicly announced in 1933 by H.G. Ramshaw, Afolayan has produced the largest number of stone sculptures that are stylistically related and originating from one source.
- (ii) Afolayan, from research and personal curiosity, has adapted forms and styles profusely from historically famous Esie, Ikom, Ife and other Nigerian stone cultures. This he condensed into contemporary sculptures that are ethno-culturally linked, thereby maintaining continuity of ancestral art.
- (iii) The artist's works are socio-culturally and economically functional which makes him a cultural ambassador, advocate, artist- historian, and entrepreneur. The fieldwork comprised of interviews, collection of photographs, analytical observation and review of related literature.

The art theory of formalism was used as the framework for this study. This theory was pioneered by Viktor Borisovich Shklovsky (1893 -1984), Roman Jakobson, and Boris Eichenbaum, and developed by Roger Fry and Clive Bell in 1914, and advanced by Clement Greenberg in mid-20th century. It uses the analytical comparisons of art forms and styles to review the very nature of an artwork. This study finds this theory appropriate because the nature

of specific artworks in the study is the focus of the paper. Elements such as colour, shapes, textures, lines and sizes are emphasized beyond the meaning and context of the works.

3. Discussion

3.1 Oladapo Afolayan: Biography and Art Practice

Just like his stone sculpture work titled "June 12" (Plate 15) shows footprints in stone, Emmanuel Sunday Oladapo Afolayan popularly known as the "Stone Man" has literally left footprints not only in the proverbial "sands of time" but also in the idiomatic "stones of life". The name "Stone Man" is a worthy description of a man who has not only lived a fulfilled life but has also achieved his lifelong dream of being an artist and a stone sculptor. Today the "Stone Man" is an important Nigerian contemporary artist whose stone art cannot be left out in the contemporary history of Nigerian art and the trajectory of stone-carving in Nigeria. Afolayan turned 60 years in 2020 and celebrated because for him, six decades in existence on earth is quite a memorable long period for any human, especially if the years have been occupied by creative endeavors and impactful living. Oladapo Afolayan feels even more fulfilled because he achieved his dream of conquering such a formidable art medium as stone. Stone as a medium, presented its challenges but Afolayan conquered its resistance as he said "...through dialogue with each stone boulder". Even though Afolayan stated stone-carving out of curiosity, Dasilva (2002, p.81) noted that when he had to make a choice for a career, he still chose to work in stone as his medium. The dream to be an artist and a carver started many years ago. As a young boy he watched, through his window, the famous traditional woodcarver George Bamidele Arowoogun, carve his *Epa* masks. Arowoogun's art studio was directly behind the home of the young Afolayan, who always looked at the works of Arowoogun and how he worked them. He also

noticed the European missionaries and other colonial professionals who trooped in and out of Arowoogun's studio and suspected that the carvings he produced must be of great importance. This experience and other significant influences affected Afolayan in his decision to be an artist and particularly a sculptor. He also benefitted from both the traditional art forms which existed in his immediate environment and the modern art he was exposed to through formal education. Osi town in Kwara state where Afolayan originated from used to be famous for woodcarving and was even the field in the 1960s from which Professor John Picton published his research "The Sculptors of Opin" (Picton, 1994, pp. 46-55). Afolayan's forebears were also skilled in one form of art or the other. His grandmother Abigail Ebe was a textile artist, who weaved and dyed cloth. His father Isreal Oni Afolayan was a skilled Blacksmith.

Oladapo Emmanuel Sunday Afolayan was born on the 5th of June, 1960 to the family of late Israel Oni Afolayan Akanro and Juliana Ebe Afolayan in Osi-Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara state, Nigeria. From Afolayan's recall, he started art early in his childhood because he was naturally gifted and talented. He said "arts for me is an inborn desire, it is a life-long passion that had stuck from childhood. I vividly remember when I was a child, I could see images in the moving clouds that most adults could not see then...I couldn't have chosen a better career"(Afolayan Interview, 2020). He also remembered carving walking sticks as his craftwork when he was in primary school, at a time when his other classmates submitted brooms, baskets and other common craftworks. He attended his primary education in his community at Local Education Authority (L.E.A.) primary school, Osi, Kwara state between the years of 1965 to 1973. In the school he was encouraged by his teachers and the town's people, being recognized as a brilliant pupil of the only primary school in his hometown. He started his secondary school immediately after he completed primary school at Osi Central Secondary School from 1973 to 1978. During his secondary school days he was given a scholarship by one Mr Philip Olasunkanmi Tella who was then a member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) serving in his school. This Youth Corps staff, on getting to know about Afolayan's artistic aspirations, bought him his first Chisel and really encouraged him to pursue his carving delights. He ventured into several productions of different art works such as mural illustrations on hotel walls, drawings and paintings which made him very popular in his hometown and earned him, his initial nickname "Afosco Art". His

artistic journey was temporarily stalled after secondary school when he worked briefly with the Ministry of Aviation as an Air Transport Control Officer and during the period he studied for his A-Levels at the Kwara State Polytechnic. However his desire to study art materialized when he gained admission to the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU) in 1980. He completed his undergraduate program there in 1984. At ABU Zaria, Afolayan specialized in Sculpture and started his destined journey as a stone carver. As an undergraduate, he was inspired by the woodcarvings of Gabriel Bamidele, Mike Bamidele and Daniel Bamidele of the Bamidele Woodcarving Dynasty. Professor Zuren Dee, Ben Ekanem and Gani Odutokun, according to Afolayan, laid the foundation for his sculptural compositions today. Others who were involved in the moulding of this great artist at this level included Professor Olorukooba in Art Education and Professor Kojo Fosu in Art History. Stone carving as a specialty for the artist however actually started when he returned to ABU Zaria for a post-graduate degree program in 1985 after his one year National Youth Service. At this post-graduate level, Afolayan decided to explore stone carving as his research focus. His choice of stone as a medium during this period was based on a personal curiosity to know why African ancestors who created the historically famous Esie, Ikom and other stone cultures, carved stones and yet in the 20th century with so much industrialization and machines, Africa lacked a vibrant contemporary stone art culture. He knew that his talent as an artist was not going to suffice if he would excel as a stone sculptor, therefore in addition to working relentlessly he took formal stone-related courses such as Petrology to understand the physical characteristics of varieties of stones. At this stage of his training Professor Fatuyi and Sculptor Ben Ekanem were his supervisors, who were very impressed with the outcome of his many stone experiments. He completed his Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) program in 1987. Fully equipped in talent, skill and education, Afolayan launched himself into his career as a stone sculptor, lecturer, administrator and mentor. From January 1988 till date, he has been in the employ of Federal Polytechnic, Auchi in present Edo state. Starting as a Lecturer III, he is presently a Chief Lecturer. Administratively he has filled several positions in Auchi Polytechnic such as Head of Sculpture Section, Head of Department, Dean of School and Director of Servicom. He has made enormous impact on the school and the Department of Fine Arts and sculpture in particular. He has been transferring his skills and zeal for work to the students. It is obvious that Afolayan is not selfish with his gift of talent as he is able and willing

to impact his knowledge of stone carving to the students and leaving a very strong legacy. Many students of Art in the Auchi Polytechnic have specialized in stone carving because of how he made it easy and attractive. Today, there is a formidable team under the name International Stone League (Nigeria) which is practically made up of his former students including popular sculptors such as Suleman Taiwo and Akano Afolayan, his younger brother. Presently Auchi Polytechnic boasts of having the only and most endowed Stone Sculpture Garden in any Nigerian School of Fine Arts. This is as a result of Afolayan's work.

One ironic and interesting fact is that as much as Afolayan is zealously teaching others stone carving, the artist revealed that nobody actually taught him stone carving. He explained that when he picked his research on stone carving during his MFA program, it was a trial and error situation. However through resilience and hard work he worked his way to success. His stone carving training came later when he was already a professional, when he attended the 22nd Annual Summer Marble and Art Workshop in Piertrasanta (Lucca) Italy in 2007 and recently Marble Art Workshop in Carusi Sculture Vie, Carrara, Italy in 2019. These Workshops exposed and trained him in the use of contemporary tools and equipment earlier unknown to him. Afolayan was the second African to have participated in the Piertrasanta workshop. "Omidan: My African Maid" (Plate 6) is one of the works he produced during the workshop.

Oladapo Afolayan has participated in many solo and group exhibitions starting as early as 1981 in Zaria with the exhibition titled "Reaching Out". Other exhibitions include: "Towards 21st Century Art" at Auchi Polytechnic in 1989 organized by the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), "Vision for Excellence" in Lagos in 1989, "Towards 21st Century Art" in Lagos in 1989, "Towards 21st Century Art" in 1990, "Images of Nigerian Nation" in 1991 in Lagos, "Crystal Forms" in 1994 in Lagos, "Royal Dialogue" in 1994 in Lagos, "Oasis" in 1998, "Promoters of Nigerian Arts 5" at the Goethe Institute in 1999, "Art and Environment" in 2000 and "Beyond Lockdown" an online art exhibition in 2020. Altogether he has participated in over thirty exhibitions where he has displayed his stone sculptures. He also has very important commissioned sculpture works in several locations all over Nigeria. They include: "Alaikoro (Town Crier)" in 1989, a 10 feet high composition located at the Olosi of Osi Palace in Osi-Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara state; "Federal Myth" (A landing Eagle) which is a 10 feet by 9 feet cast stone

produced in 1987 and located at the Federal University of Technology Akure Main Gate; "Eyo" a 15 feet simulated marble stone cast located at the Lagos House, Garki, Abuja; "Ogbe Abiyamo" (Plate 14), and "Intimacy" both stone carvings which are located at the Yemisi Shyllon Garden, Maryland Lagos. Other commissions are "The Seed in the Work of God" (Sower), a 2006 cast stone work, 10 feet high, located at Peace House Camp, Bethany Resort, Gboko Benue state, Nigeria. There are other commissioned works produced by Afolayan in this same Bethany Resort such as "Vessels of Discipleship", "The Samaritan/Sychar Woman by the Well" and "Preacher". There were also so many of his works that were bought by patrons or were given out as gifts without documentation. This lack of records, the artist regrets because today he is not able to account totally for all his works which may be well over 300 stone sculptures. These works are distributed in private collections, homes and galleries and also in public institutions. His first collector was Chief Olizanbu who was an executive of United Bank for Africa.

Afolayan has had the opportunity of meeting many renowned artists both in Nigeria and internationally. In Nigeria, Bruce Onobrakpeya's Annual Harmattan Art Workshop in Agbarha-Otor, Delta state by the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation opened the doors for Afolayan to explore all the possibilities of stone and also the opportunity to mentor like-minded artists. Afolayan attended and facilitated at all the Harmattan Workshops at Agbarha-Otor in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 up till date (2020) and this has been a great boost for his career. Other workshops such as "National Stone Carving Workshop" in Lagos in 2005, "K12 Teachers Summer Workshop" at the National Gallery of Art Lagos and the "Marble and Art Workshops" in Italy in 2007 and 2019 exposed him to artists outside Nigeria and also have been avenues for collaboration with art and sculpture specialists worldwide. This has been very profitable for the artist. He says: "Art has been highly profitable to me. Being an artist has afforded me the opportunity to come in contact with, and be influenced by several great minds in the art world and their artworks. I've also had the privilege of training and raising several artists in the past thirty years. My artworks have paid my bills and have also been my source of livelihood". The contributions of this humble and great artist to Nigerian art, particularly the development of stone carving cannot be over-emphasized. His life and works are of great influence to contemporary Nigerian arts. At this stage of his life he looks forward to further mentoring and working to build solid supports for the future of art in

Nigeria. His founding of the International Stone League of Nigeria and founding executive membership of the Sculptors' Association of Nigeria (ScAN) are some of his efforts in that direction. He is also looking forward to hosting the first National Stone Sculpture Exhibition in Nigeria. The artist has published three articles namely: "The Harmattan Workshop and the Evolution of Contemporary Nigerian Stone Carving" (1999), "Art and Society: Visual Art and the Pentecostal Controversy" (2000), "Trends in Contemporary Nigerian Stone Carving: Classification based on Technical Orientation" (2000)

In his extra-curricular activities, Afolayan identifies himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and being a minister of the Gospel as another vocation he is

deeply committed to. He says that the Bible is his daily companion and his spiritual mentors are Brother Gbile Akanni and Professor Olugbenga Mokuola of the Living Seed Team in Nigeria. Reading of great books that are inspiring have also contributed to the shaping of his great mind. Creatively he has been inspired by the works of Michelangelo Buonarroti, Korczak Ziolkowski and the artists in his family, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Gino Lombardi and Pa Lucio Carusi. His wife Dr Olubunmi Ola-Afolayan who is a textile art and fashion design expert with a Ph.D., has continuously provided a day-to-day motivation for him in the arts over the years. The artist is a devoted family man with a large household. Typically two of his children are graduates of Fine Art and practicing in Painting and Sculpture. His hobbies include dancing and karate.



PLATE 6: *Omidan*, Carrara Marble, 2007, 2ft.

Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 7: *Alaboyun* Steatite Stone, 1987, 1.6ft

Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020

2.2 Formal Analysis of the Stone Sculptures of Oladapo Afolayan

The forms, themes and styles of Afolayan's stone sculptures have always been affected by his aspirations at various times. The forms of his early carvings were bulky due to inexperience from the fact that he had been self-taught and also because his tools were not sophisticated enough to handle smaller and more intricate pieces. However as he advanced in his practice, he imported power tools and equipment and expanded the variety of works. His works were also not initially stained (coloured), they were left in the stones' natural colours. The artist discovered staining accidentally when he was working with oily hands. The surfaces of his earlier works were also not finished as he desired due to limitation of his tools. Most surfaces were finished smoothly, which he achieved from grinding and sandpapering. However with advancement in tools, he has been able to create surface texturing, patterning and designing with lines and shapes. The medium which he commonly used was Steatite stone. His choice for this stone is because it is soft and easier to work on. He also uses

Limestone, Marble, Quartzite and Granite. His works titled "Northern Aristocrat" (1989) (Plate 13), and "Aiyelujara I" (1990) (Plate 16) are in Steatite stone while Limestone was used for "Intimacy" and "Ogbe Abiyamo" (Plate 14) produced in 2000. "Brotherhood" (1984) (Plate 20), a very early work, was created in Granite. The forms of the artist's works mostly depended on the sizes and shapes of the boulders. He did not split stones but worked around them. The works were mostly in-the-round, he hardly made relief sculptures. They were also mostly vertically standing, very few works were presented horizontally.

Thematically, the works of Oladapo Afolayan can be described as socio-cultural and span different strata of contemporary life in Nigeria. The sculptures are mostly based on Yoruba idioms and traditional beliefs, Christian ideology, local socio-political happenings and issues, and cultural symbolisms of African existence. "June 12" (1993) (Plate 15) and "Siddon Look" (1995) (Plate 18) are political. The first is a memorial to the famous Nigerian political crisis that started on June 12, 1993 till 1998 and the

second, according to the artist, is a reference to the Nigerian President Abacha's government and the tragic murder of Chief Bola Ige, the Chief Justice of the federation then. Three works that are examples of sculptures that thematically uphold Nigerian cultural heritage are "Northern Aristocrat" (1989) (Plate 13), "Ogbuefi" (1998) (Plate 19) and "Tribute to Nok" (1998). Symbolic works such as "Ere Ibeji" (1997) (Plate 12) and "Twin Form" (1998) depict the African traditional sacredness of the concept of twin birth while "Bond" (2019) (Plate 11) shows the depth of bonding of the African family system. These are some of the works that promote African identity and cultural ideology. Other works classified under traditional symbolism are "Arewa" (1997), "Idapo Mimo" (1997) and "Alaboyun" (1987) (Plate 7).

The style of Afolayan's works range from semi-naturalism to cubism, stylization and complete abstraction. Many of his works are also biomorphic.

His works, closest to naturalism are the sculptures he produced during his stay in Italy. The obvious reason for this being that there was the availability of variety of advanced and sophisticated tools and equipment that enabled his human effort. "Ogbuefi" (Plate 19) is one of the semi-naturalistic works. "Northern Aristocrat" is cubism and according to the artist, the cubical form of this sculpture was one of its attractive qualities that made it a desirable collection item by Guinness Nigeria. He has had other works also being bought and collected because of the peculiarity of their styles. His stylized sculptures include "Ogbe Abiyamo" (2000) (Plate 12) which was commissioned by Engineer Yemisi Shyllon, a very popular Nigerian art collector with the largest private art collection in Nigeria. "Hidden Agenda" (1994) (Plate 10), "Aiyelujara I" (1990) (Plate 16), "Idapo Mimo" (1997) are abstract in style and also break the stylistic myth that stone works must be rounded at the bottom to be able to have stability.



PLATE 8: *Oladapo Afolayan*
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 9: *Aje Apeka 'nu Ko*, Carrara Marble, 2019, h.2ft
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 10: *Hidden Agenda*, Steatite Stone, 1994, 1.4ft
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 11: *Bond* Bianco Carrara Marble, 2019, 2ft
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 12: Ere Ibeji 2, Steatite Stone, 1997, 1ft radius
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 13: Northern Aristocrat, Steatite Stone, 1989, 2.5ft. Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 14: *Ogbe Abiyamo*, Marble, 2000
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 15: *June 12*, Steatite, 1993, h. 2.5ft. 4.6ft.
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 16: *Aiyelujara*, Dolomite Marble, 1990, h.10ft
Photo Credit: Ayodele O. 2020



PLATE 17: *Abiyamo* Steatite Stone, 1987, h. 13ft 7in
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 18: *Sidon Look* Steatite Stone, 1995, 1.3ft
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020



PLATE 19: *Ogbuefi*, Steatite Stone, 1990, 1.8ft
Photo Credit: Afolayan, O. 2020

4. Conclusion: Continuity and Development

In the quest to revive the stone art and stone-carving in Nigeria, Afolayan has continued several aspects of the historical stone art and at the same time developed the art through the modernization of his practice. Formal similarities between the old and new such as in the case of *Stone Monolith*, Ikom (Plate 2) and *Aje Apeka 'nu Ko* (Plate 9) are possible because Afolayan had adapted some of the conceptual elements of traditional African art such as phallicism. The artist literally re-enacted the Nok art culture in his work "Tribute to Nok" (1998). The choice of Yoruba titles for many of his works is a way to further give African identity to his contemporary sculptures in global circles. Therefore titles such as *Alaboyun* (The Pregnant One), *Ewa* (Beauty), *Binu Nri Lobi Nyan* (A person's destiny is determined self), *Aiyelu Jara* (Life is Hollow), *Arewa* (The Beautiful), *Ogbe Abiyamo* (The Pain of Motherhood), *Idapo Mimo* (Holy Union), *Okun Omo Iya Yi* (The Connecting Birth Cord), *Omidan* (Maiden), and *Iranse Birin* (Woman Messenger) are very few of the Yoruba names given to the hordes of stone works to situate them geographically and ideologically in Africa. Afolayan's works are exhibited and in collections worldwide therefore is an extension of the African cultural heritage.

Afolayan's advice for artists is consistency in practice, convenient choice of medium, originality of style and hard work. Faith in God and resilience are also virtues he believes will go a long way to bring success. For the government his advice is that they should provide more adequate funding for arts and cultural agencies that will boost tourism, art entrepreneurship and national development. He believes that if art specialists head and manage art institutions such as museums, galleries and art councils, the promotion of art will escalate. Following the footprints marked by Afolayan in the sands of art practice in Nigeria will assure a survival of not only stone art but a future generation of vibrant and long lasting art practice.

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