



A Comparative Analysis of Two Creative Metal Sculptors: Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola

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Abstract. Welded metal sculpture has gained significant recognition within the art world. It is exhibited in prestigious galleries, museums, and public spaces globally. This article presents a comparative analysis of two renowned welded metal sculptors, Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola examining their artistic styles, techniques, and thematic representations. Research has been carried out on these two artists but the comparative analysis of their works is yet to be documented hence this study. By exploring the work of these artists, the article aims to provide insights into the diverse approaches employed in the field of welded metal sculpture. The analysis is supported by critical evaluation of relevant sources including scholarly articles, books, and gallery exhibitions, to highlight the distinctive characteristics and contributions of each artist.

Keywords: Welded metal, sculpture comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Art experimental is imprecise term applied to art that need to do with exploring new ideas and or/technology (Sobowale, 2017) In the contemporary sculptural practice, gone are the days when medium in Sculpture could be listed, medium in Sculpture varies and dwell more on the creative and exploratory ability of the sculptor/artist in general (Ononome, 2019). Metal is the explore material used in this paper. Welded metal sculpture is a unique form of artistic expression that combines the principles of sculpture with the technical skills of welding. Welded metal sculpture is an artistic form that employs welding techniques to create three-dimensional structures. Its origins can be traced back to the early 20th century when modernist artists sought

innovative ways to break away from traditional sculptural techniques. Welded metal sculpture emerged as an art form during the mid-20th century. Pioneers such as Julio González and David Smith experimented with welding techniques, extending the possibilities of sculpture beyond traditional materials like stone or clay. González's use of welded iron in his works, such as "Woman Combing Her Hair," challenged conventional notions of form and materiality (Clark, 2008). These early artistic explorations laid the foundation for future generations of welded metal sculptors. Welded metal sculpture requires a combination of artistic vision and technical proficiency in welding. Artists employ various welding techniques, including arc welding, MIG (metal inert gas) welding, or TIG (tungsten inert gas) welding, to create their compositions. They fuse together metal pieces, utilizing heat and electric current to transform raw materials into intricate sculptures.

In Contemporary Art, sculpture is diverse, and the use of metals has been explored in so many ways. Metal comes in different types and ranges like Gold, Silver, Copper, Tin, Lead, and Iron among others. The distinct properties of various metals make it possible for diverse applications in metal sculpture (Ugochuckwu and Emifione, 2023). Welded metal sculpture provides artists with a wide range of possibilities for creative expression. The malleability of metal allows for intricate detailing, dynamic shapes, and exploration of negative space. Sculptors can experiment with different metals like steel, aluminum, or bronze, each offering unique properties and textures. This versatility enables artists to convey concepts and emotions in diverse ways, making welded metal

sculpture an engaging medium for both artists and viewers.

Welded metal sculpture in Nigeria is a vibrant and growing art form that showcases the creativity and skill of Nigerian artists. These sculptures are created using various welding techniques and often incorporate recycled materials, adding an element of sustainability to the art form. Welded metal sculpture in Nigeria has gained substantial recognition both nationally and internationally in recent decades. Celebrated for its ingenuity, craftsmanship, and cultural significance, this art form has played a pivotal role in promoting Nigerian artistic expressions.

Welding gives room for different types of metal to be worked upon in a single piece as well as allowing the use of non-metallic materials to be combined with metal in executing pieces of artwork. This technique of combining different media for a creative image in sculpture is known as assemblage (Sobowale and Adepegba 2015). Assemblage Technique in welded metal work is a method of using junks, waste, and found objects creatively in making art work. It requires painstaking thinking. Assemblage welded work is difficult to reproduce. Artist involved in this approach is known as environmentally friendly / environmentalist as it reduces cost of production as the material use is either picked from dumping site or but at cheap rate compare to new one. The finished work is mostly spray with transparent lacquer to retain the natural color of the junk use for better appreciation of such materials in second use.

Welded metal sculpture has gained significant recognition within the art world. It is exhibited in prestigious galleries, museums, and public spaces globally. The genre's aesthetic possibilities and technical complexity have captivated both art enthusiasts and collectors alike, contributing to its rising popularity (Adams, 2012). There are some notable Nigerian metal sculptors, who could be referred to as one of Nigerians most outstanding and recognized, Bruce Onobrakpeya, El-Anatsui, Roqib Basorun, Olu Amoda Akeem Mariana, have used wastes for outstanding aesthetic and functional art works. In this light the study is an attempt to make a comparative analysis of two unique contemporary sculptor artists that explore. The comparative analysis of the works of Adeola Balogun and Popoola Adedotun, will be interrogated and documented examining their artistic styles, techniques, and thematic representations. These artists, among many others, have expanded the boundaries of welded metal sculpture and influenced the artistic landscape.

2. Literature Review

The emergence of welded metal sculpture in Nigeria can be traced back to the mid-20th century. Historically, this art form evolved from traditional sculptural practices, incorporating new materials and techniques. A seminal figure in this evolution is Ben Enwonwu, a Nigerian sculptor known for his pioneering work in welding and metal sculpture (Okeke-Agulu, 2019). Enwonwu's experiments with bronze casting and welding techniques laid the foundation for subsequent generations of Nigerian sculptors to explore the possibilities of welded metal as a medium for artistic expression. Assemblage metal sculpture involves the creation of artworks by assembling and juxtaposing various found or discarded metal objects and materials. Nigerian artists have adeptly incorporated diverse elements such as bolts, car parts, wires, and other industrial debris to create visually captivating and conceptually meaningful sculptures (Kabia, 2010). The use of welding, brazing, and soldering techniques allows these artists to transform seemingly unrelated and discarded materials into cohesive and thought-provoking artworks.

Perani (2009) records that Several Nigerian sculptors have made significant contributions to the development of welded metal sculpture. One such artist is El Anatsui, who's intricate and large-scale metal tapestries exemplify the fusion of traditional African aesthetics with contemporary artistic practices. Anatsui's innovative use of discarded materials such as bottle caps and aluminum cans showcase the transformative potential of welded metal sculpture in both a conceptual and aesthetic sense. Moreover, Chike Aniakor, a Nigerian art historian and sculptor, has played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting welded metal sculpture in Nigeria (Banjoko, 2019). Aniakor's sculptures have not only extended the technical possibilities of welding in metal art but also exemplify his deep engagement with traditional Igbo culture and its transformation in the modern era. Peju Alatise is an influential Nigerian artist known for her use of assemblage metal sculpture to explore themes of gender, identity, and societal issues (Olayiwola, 2019). Her thought-provoking artworks utilize discarded metal objects to address contemporary social and cultural commentary while encouraging viewers to question societal norms.

Adepegba (2014) opines that Welded metal sculpture in Nigeria often reflects the country's rich cultural heritage, as well as contemporary social and political issues. Symbolism and storytelling are common themes found in Nigerian welded metal sculptures. These artworks often incorporate traditional motifs,

religious symbolism, and representations of daily life, thereby preserving cultural practices while addressing contemporary concerns.

Furthermore, many Nigerian sculptors according to Imarhiagbe (2016) utilize welded metal as a medium to comment on socio-political issues, such as corruption, exploitation, and environmental degradation. Through their creations, these artists provide a platform for critical dialogue, encouraging viewers to reflect upon the challenges faced by Nigerian society. The list of sculptors interrogating and exploring welded metal in Nigeria is numerous. The newest addition to this is Dotun Popoola and Adeola Balogun.

From the reluctant professional of the 1980s, to gaining gradual energy in the 1990s, the Nigerian artist of welded metal has come of age in the 21st century. Most renowned in the Nigerian space of the 21st century welded metal art is Olu Amoda. His art has inspired a new generation of welded metal artists. In 1986, artist and Head of Department, Fine Arts, at Yabatech, Kolade Oshinowo contributed to the new beginning when he got Amoda to join Yabatech as a lecturer. From the seeds sowed then by Oshinowo, which germinated through the mentorship of Amoda, there emerged one of Ajorin artists, Adeola Balogun (b.1966). He was among Amoda's students at Yabatech, where he graduated in 1993, specialising in Sculpture (Sowole, 2020).

In Ajorin catalogue (2020) Ogunwo records Dotun Popoola (b.1981) has demonstrated a remarkable alertness through his intricate forms churned out of his mig and arc welding dexterity. Poised to produce ornate form from carefully selected jettisoned alloy materials, Dotun, a workaholic, once again has displayed unmatched prowess in the manipulation of unimaginable materials repurposing them into elaborate chromatic sculptures. His recent exploration of aluminum stainless steel metal is outstanding and laudable. The icing on the cake is the deliberate introduction of colours. Adedoyin (2018) quoting (Abiodun and fajuyigbe, 2013) opines that Dotun Popoola metal works reflects that of Yoruba philosophical ideology which is an influence of Ife Art School of Onaism movement which described as artistic ideology that reflects the Yoruba concept of design and aesthetics in modern Nigeria art. Such as the Araism style created by Mufu Onifade as a style that involves a composition of strokes that interrelate to form patterns, textures and visual images. It is evident in Dotun Popoola works that he revolved his works along the pattern and style of Araism which

talks about his background has a graduate of Ife Art School whom the environment has greatly influenced.

Others researches on the techniques, style and diverse approach has been carried out on These two contemporary Nigerian artists under study but the comparative analysis of the two works is still understudied Therefore, the works of these artists, which are pregnant with meanings, shall be examined and analyzed.

1.1 The artist's biographies

It is necessary to study the backgrounds of the artists to facilitate a better understanding and comparative analysis of their works. This will provide information on their sociological influences as well as professional developments. Most importantly it provides a good foundation for contextual analysis of the selected works.

1.1.1 Adeola Balogun

Adeola Balogun was born in Ota, Ogun state on November 17. He graduated from Yaba College of Technology, with specialization in sculpture (1993/94) and Masters in Fine Art (MFA, Sculpture) at the University of Benin (2001/4), Benin City, and Edo State, Nigeria. He also has a PhD in Sculpture (2020) from the Delta State University, Abraka, and Delta State. Balogun also did his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at Yaba College of Technology, Yaba Lagos. Thus, he became a lecturer at his alma mater in 1995 after his National Youth Service. After his HND, He also has a Master of Fine Art (MFA) degree (Sculpture) in 2004 from the University of Benin as well as a Ph.D. Studio Art (Sculpture) from Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria, in 2020.

Balogun's artistic success story started in 1995 because that was the year that some of his artwork was first noticed and collected by Engr. Yemisi Shyllon. Shyllon is a foremost Nigerian art collector and probably the ultimate art patron in Africa. Balogun explained how his journey with Engr. Yemisi Shyllon started in 1995, he bought his five works (four during the show's preview and the fifth at the exhibition proper) during that year's Yaba College of Technology art exhibition of the school's art lecturers held at Russian Cultural Centre, Ikoyi, Lagos, packaged by Prof. Rukeme Noserime (then HOD Fine Art), who later introduced him to Shyllon as the young artist who did the artworks that strongly tickle his fancy. Shyllon later gave Balogun his business card and encouraged him to visit him at his Niger Rite office in Ikeja, Lagos, back then. After the show, Lara Ige-Jacks, encouraged him to visit Shyllon because he asked about him from

her during her last visit to Shyllon in his office. Thus, Balogun paid Shyllon a visit in his office, which marked the beginning of a brighter fulfilling future between a major art patron (Shyllon) and the young artist, now a master artist, Balogun. It was during one of his other subsequent visits to Shyllon that he took Balogun on a breakfast visit to another major art patron, Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi (late), that same year, 1995. Shyllon has the largest collection of Balogun's realistic figure sculptures in bronze and glass fibre, among others, thus; he is one of Adeola Balogun's major art patrons. From 1995 till date, Engr. Yemisi Shyllon had contributed greatly to the establishment of Adeola Balogun as a renowned contemporary Nigerian artist without blemish. Without blemish because despite Balogun's unimposing and pleasant mien, he is without any iota of doubt, a hardworking artistic genius.

Balogun has several solo and group exhibitions to his name. Apart from Nigeria, Balogun have also exhibited in Kenya, Sweden, the USA, England, and UAE, among other countries abroad. Though he specialized in sculpture, Balogun also draw and paint coupled with his mixed media and multimedia works or repurposed/ hybrid sculptures, which attested to his eclectic artistic nature. He has also participated in several seminars and conferences both within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. He also has contributed to journal publications. He has facilitated and/or participated in several creative workshops. Adeola Balogun's artistic peregrination from realistic sculptural figures to stylized and quasi-realistic metal as well as rubber cum tire-dynamic sculptures were legion, well collected, and treasured. His metallurgical sculptural mastery led him on to abstracted musical instruments that inspired hybrid and repurposed sculpture, and recently his works of art, 32 works, will be classified into six groups based on formal and contextual/ material exploration as the case maybe. The six classifications are Head Series (6 works), Power Play (8 works), Spirituality (3 works), Music and Dance (7 works), Labyrinthine Morphology (4 works), and Fishes (4 works). from 2020 till date in 2022, Balogun is presently the Head of Department, Fine Art, School of Art, Design and Printing at Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. He is a Chief Lecturer in the institution.

1.1.2 Dotun Popoola

Dotun, born in Nigeria in 1981, is a synergetic metal sculptor who has carved a niche for himself with his hyper realistic monumental metal sculptures. He holds

a National Diploma in painting and General Arts in Auchu Polytechnic, Auchu Edo State, where he graduated as the best student in painting and general arts in the institution in 2004. He had his first and second degree in Fine and applied arts with a specialization in sculpture and painting respectively in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. Dotun trained in many art studios, and he is a certified hybrid metal sculptor; a resident artist in Lemmon South Dakota, at John Lopez studio, United States of America. Dotun won the Director General's Award of Best Artist of the year in the maiden NYSC arts competition in 2009.

He featured in 2018 at West Africa International Art Fair "ARTX Lagos" he represented Nigeria at the maiden scrap art exhibition in Qatar 2019 and Global Art Festival in Gujarat India 2020. Dotun has participated in twenty-nine group exhibitions, fourteen joint, and four solo exhibitions. He is passionate about touching lives through his artistic and leadership skills; turning trash to treasures, rubbish to rubies. Dotun facilitates art workshops for students, professionals, NGO's, healthcare institutions, hospices, orphanage homes, rehabilitation centers and schools locally and internationally. Dotun has equally executed several monumental sculptures and large murals both in Nigeria and United States of America. He has worked as a curator II with the National Gallery of Arts, Oshogbo outstation, Osun State Nigeria, between 2012 till 2018. Dotun currently worked as a full-time studio experimentalist.

Dotun continues to provide landmark mentoring opportunities for Professional development for local and international artists in his studio in South-West Nigeria. His Immense contribution to the growth of Art globally has been featured in over 40 newspaper publications and TV stations both locally and internationally which includes the New York Times and Al Jazeera.

Dotun Popoola who specializes in synergetic metal sculpting. He creates pieces of art works from discarded scrap metals. His works are focused on transforming trash to treasures, rubbish to rubies and waste to wealth by repurposing wastes that threaten the ecosystem. Over the years Dotun is known to have made a lot of tremendous and wonderful pieces some of which would be analyzing

Analysis of Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola works

Adeola Balogun have made a lot of tremendous and wonderful pieces of metal sculptures some of which ten would be analyzing below:



Plate 1: Artist: Adeola Balogun
Title: Electrifying Dance
Medium: Mixed welded metal
Size: 79cm (L) x 82cm (B)
Year: 2020
Source: Ajorin catalogue

Electrifying Dance is a duo Metal sculpture by Adeola Balogun with electronic boards and plugs and welded metal. The electronic board is used as the skirt of the dancers. He explored electronic gadget in depicting the free flowing sketch of the female dancer in away suggesting the state of her being at fortissimo level. The electronic gadget was used to represent the role of electronics in aiding people to get connected with the global world particularly via social media the current world-wide use of electronic application has allow so many people to showcase their talent and be seen by wide audience. Without opening an electronic item, the interior compositions are hidden from the eyes, so is how getting exposed to social media today has opened peoples mind and thought to more crime unlike before its advent in Nigeria. (Sobowale, 2017)

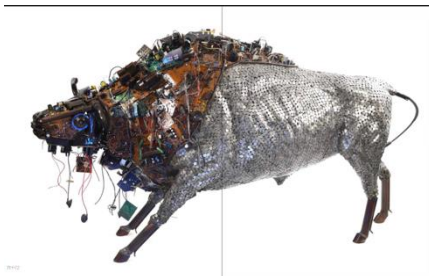


Plate 2: Artist: Adeola Balogun:
Title: Supreme Mechanism
Medium: Mixed metal
Size: 270cm (L) x 110cm (B)
Year: 2020
Source: Ajorin catalogue

“Supreme Mechanism” by Adeola is a mixed media sculpture that incorporates electronic panel and Naira coins in the execution of the charging bull. The body structure of the bull is rendered with the silver coins and electronic panels for the head structure. Bulls are most commonly considered headstrong, determined animals. They symbolize strength, power, stubbornness, and so many more traits. (Chris, 2020). The piece is pointing us to the current move by the government to eradicate / reduce physical cash transactions which if well managed will reduce the risk of armed robbery. However, the unfortunate aspect of it is the exorbitant bank charges and exposure to internet fraud. Preventing these from happening therefore requires vigilance especially as in the case in Nigeria where banks are fond of

deducting money without any transaction. Putting an end to this requires that people stand in unity to protest and protect themselves from extortions and exploitations by Nigerian. (sobowale, 2021) The piece could also be seen in the way Nigerians especially the youth spend exorbitantly on the latest electronic technology and the internet.

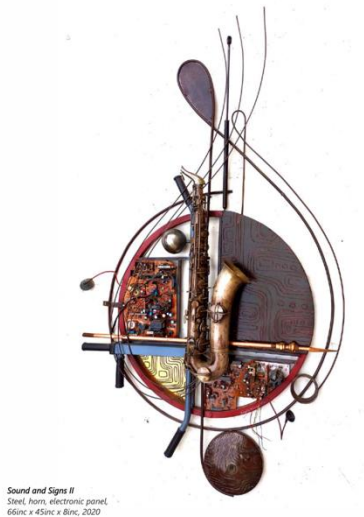


Plate 3: Artist: Adeola Balogun
Title: Sound and Signs
Medium: Mixed metal
Size: 66in (L) x 54in (B)
Year: 2020
Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Musical instruments are needed to perform the music that will warrant and dictate the type of dance that will follow. These works filled the creative space for the musical effects, allusions, and illusions needed before or after the dance. Music has enjoyed divergent conceptions; it represents the identity symbol of each continent, each generation and each individual. Music can be put simply as the art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds in a harmonious or expressive way (ikvolie, 2011), "Sounds and Signs" is a hybrid sculptures with musical instruments, steel, electronic panels, and other objects were creatively repurposed to produce the sublime abstract sculptures. The sculptures are recreated and re-brewed old wines that get better with age; in new bottles with reminiscence and enduring flavor that enhance the creative mastery, music, and dance in contemporary Nigerian art and times.



Plate 4: Artist: Adeola Balogun
Title: Rare species
Mixed: welded Metal

Size: 97in (L) x 78in (B)

Year:2020

Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Fishes abound in the marine world. The numerous beautiful fishes, in reality, must have inspired Balogun to produce these magnanimously huge rare fishes in his body of work. They are peculiar and interesting sculptures made from repurposed items and objects such as steel, stainless steel, electronic panels, and brass bowl, among others. Some fishes such as the goldfishes and lady fishes, among others, must have been on Balogun's mind when he was executing his rare species sculptures. These fish sculptural pieces are another set of Balogun's wonderful re-visitation of themes with superb contemporary finishing. The calm and sublime nature of the sculpture could be likened to a woman. Rare species are species that is uncommon, few in number, or not abundant like finding a woman with good character, tender and have all good quality. The Female gender, though they are considered beautiful and fragile have nowadays been tagged as 'Fear woman' because of their love for money and others.

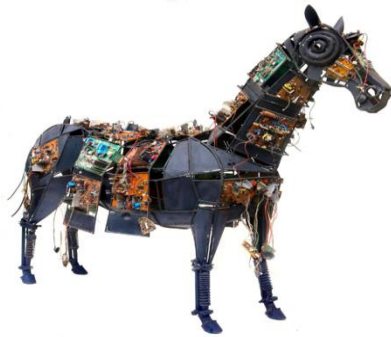


Plate 5: Artist: Adeola Balogun

Title: where is the Emir

Mixed Metal

Size:102in (L) x 87in (B)

Year: 2020

Source: Transmogrification catalogue

“Where is the Emir” The work is a hybrid sculpture of metal, steel, and electronic panels that were used to produce a stylized but quasi-realistic regal black stallion with the paraphernalia of royalty and power being further expressed with colors and glitz derived from the repurposed electronic panels employed as regal covering and accouterments for the horse as the horse is meant for the emir. The emir .is a powerful leader in the northern part of Nigeria, The Emir made laws over the areas under his jurisdiction. But, the powerful owner/ rider, which is the Emir was missing in the composition; hence the title, “Where is the Emir. “Where is the Emir,” is a sculpture piece that points toward the power play that happened in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria, whereby Emir Sanusi Lamido Sanusi was dethroned in 2020 by the State Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, and another prince of Kano was turbaned as the new Emir; was the contextual reality and inspiration for the work. It is a sublime hybrid sculpture with repurposed finishing from Balogun's variety of creative oeuvre. “Where is the Emir” is a standard sculptural masterpiece, which is one of many from Balogun's creative army.



Title: Sound spiration

Plate 6: Artist: Adeola Balogun

Size: 186cm (H) x 120cm (L) x15cm (B)

Medium: Mixed media

Year: 2021

Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Musical instrument are devices created to make musical sound. Adeola make use of metal plate and aluminum wire to create this artwork, the sound from trumpet and violin are magnificent when heard and can awoke emotion and give hope. Music represents symbol, personality and identity, the sound produces. From it indicates the dance or performance. The intricately artwork showcase stunning craftsmanship. Music gives hope and sense of relief or escape. With his creativity he has been able to use this artwork to bring to light that one is not alone and that the night will birth a bright new day.

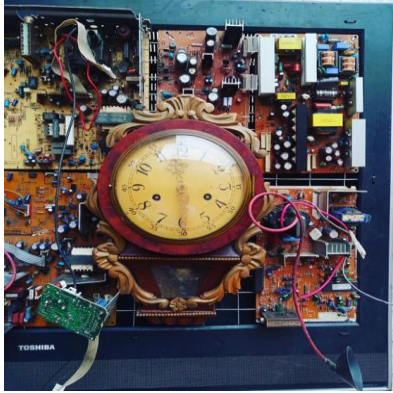


Plate 7: Artist: Adeola Balogun

Title: The Real Deal

Size: Unknown

Medium: Electronic panel

Year: 2021

Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Time is of essence in every human endeavor since it symbolizes the experience of human or persistence. The artwork can be human life because it keeps on moving no matter how hard and tiring life can be. The use of different panel and wall clock show the day-to-day activity of human and how it connected to their use of time, making it easy for one to understand that if anything should happen for the panel then the clock will be affected and also indicate the movement of life and how it works. The realization of this is to a large extent and it determines how it is expended.



Plate 8: Artist: Adeola Balogun

Title: Center of Attraction (Drum of Honor)

Size: 47cm (H) x 103cm (L) x 98cm (B)

Medium: Mixed media

Year: 2019

Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Historically, one of the reasons for rolling out drums in many African societies is to celebrate and honor those who have positively and greatly contributed to the society, but unfortunately this act does not work this way anymore

because most of the deserving, worthy members or individual of the society are rarely recognized with such appreciation for their time, sacrifice and contribution. In this new era this rolling of drum is now been used to bestow honor to highest bidders regardless of their integrity or moral standard in the society. Adeola use of iron, rope, electronic panel, animal skill and traditional motif to create the art pieces shows the level of creativeness hence displaying a multilayered allusion to the ills and contradictions that pervade the landscape of the society ranging from materialism and consumerism.

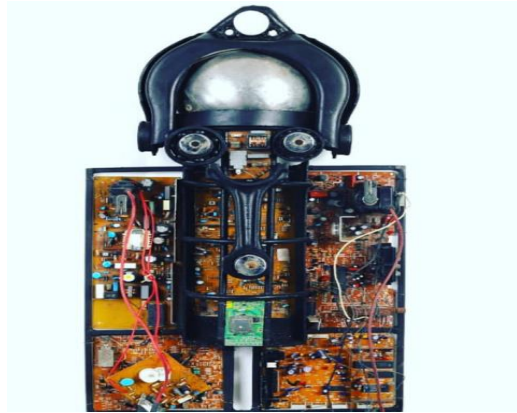


Plate 9: Artist: Adeola Balogun
Title: The shield
Size: 76cm (H) x 45cm (L) x 9cm (B)
Medium: mixed media
Year: 2020
Source: Transmogrification catalogue

Artworks are created to help individuals process their emotions and gain psychological insight. Each piece of these artworks is material of recycle steel and electronic panel with bulb done in form of human figure to explore how the brain protected the mind against mental distress or harm just like a warrior uses shield to protect their self during war or on battle field against their enemies. The art work protract how people hides their pain and struggle yet therapeutic to smile and laughs when there is a lot of hidden things behind the seemingly pleasant facade.



Plate 10: Artist: Adeola Balogun
Title: fearless
Medium: mixed media
Size: 95cm (H) x 32cm (L) x 21cm (B)
Year: 2021
Source: Transmogrification catalogue

The artwork is a posthumous award in honor of Fela Anikulapo Kuti as African fearless man during the celebration of felaboration. Fela who is the creator of Afro music was a multi-instrumentalist who fearlessly applied his music as a weapon of fighting oppression in all its forms. The saxophone as a musical instrument played a unique and prominent role in his musical genre, he was a thorn in the flesh of the power that was and he painfully paid for it. Even after his death his music still hold a great significance and important to African and it till reign.

3. Dotun Popoola works

Over the years Dotun is known to have made a lot of tremendous and wonderful pieces of metal sculptures some of which ten would be analyzing below;



Plate 11: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: Portrait of Adeola
Medium: Mixed welded metal
Size:57 cm (L) x 32 cm (B)
Year:2018
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Portrait of Adeola is a relief metal sculpture. In this piece, Dotun leverages solely on Plasma cutting. Through plasma cutting and painting, he imbues geometric and organic motifs to enrich his subjects contextually and aesthetically. He embellishes a round metal plate by cutting out designs, ornamentation, and motifs found in traditional Yoruba carvings to realize picturesque Portrait of a Yoruba female with bike chains to present the neck beads around her neck and small springs for the hair. He picks this every-day object used by local masons and transforms it into objects of beauty and admiration. Portrait of Adeola was created by Dotun as a tribute and acknowledgement to his wife whose name is Adeola, her support and patience in the course of his career.



Plate 12: Artist: Dotun Popoola

Title: Alantakun

Medium: Mild Steel, Metal Scraps Auto base and Acrylic,

Size: 153cm (H) x 71cm (L) x 23cm (B)

Year: 2020

Source: Ajorin catalogue

In Alantakun, (spider) Dotun assemble panels, and other object in this composition, he employs the use of plasma cutting for web like created by the spider and it's skillfully painted in brown and also features a lady bug in red and a small butterfly painted in yellow. you're familiar with the children's story of Anansi the Spider, you might know that in the Yoruba culture of Africa, spiders are representative of a trickster spirit. Across other cultures, it's the spider's web that creates unique meaning (Arrow blog, 2021) This piece points toward the dangerous nature of a spider whenever it's spun its web and catching unsuspecting prey in its web. Alantakun could also be likening to the nature of the struggle of human life and the danger in making a living. The butterfly motif which has cultural symbolism and interpretations such as endurance, hope, and life struggle as well as representing human celebration of their successful life journeys. The lady bug, speckled little creatures have long been considered signs of good luck



Plate 13: Artist: Dotun Popoola

Title: Esin Oba

Medium: Mixed welded metal

Size: 84 (H) x20 (L) x54 (B)

Year: 2018

Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Èsin Oba (The Royal Horse), Popoola transliterates the notion of the horsepower into imagistic re-collections, by retrieving shards from multitudes of automobile body parts, to realize the picturesque deportment portraying an equestrian horse. Esin Oba (The King's Horse) features a gawking horse formed out of discarded machine parts. Dotun forms the mane with the gas tank of a motorcycle, dysfunctional electrical generator parts, shock absorbers, generator-pull-cord compartment, brake pads, steering knuckles, control arms etc. The fetlocks and crest of the horse are made out of twisted metals carelessly locked together, welded and painted in red, orange and yellow. He forms the horse's tack out of cut-out metal and trims the edges of the throat latch, cheek piece, and noseband with motorcycle chains. The Cheeks are represented with clutch-disc-covers and the bits, muzzles and chin grooves are depicted with manipulated spoons, wrenches, pliers and a plethora of small medium and large found auto parts. In Yoruba culture, the horse is mostly associated with royalty, representing the superiority of the kingdom of Òyó. According to oral and textual sources, Sàngó was an excellent rider, owning a royal stable of 10,000 horses. This aspect is highly present in the Sàngó cult, where it is stated that his initiated, *élégún Sàngó*, are ridden by him. At the same time, due to the horse's speed, allowing fast and long-distance movements, he is associated with the lightning, mythical-natural weapon that Sàngó would use to defeat his enemies (Dias, 2023)



Plate 14: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: Owiwi
Medium: Mixed welded metal
Size: 19in (H) x 12in (L) x 8in (B)
Year: 2018
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Owiwi is a welded sculpture that features a owl made out of discarded parts. The Beak and the feathers on cheeks are formed with manipulated spoons. The other part of the body was rendered with used parts while standing on a sliver rod as the tree. As an inventive visual artist, Popoola accentuate the eyes of the owl in his work titled *Òwiwí*. Dispatched as the symbol of the artist who sees clearly and most easily in the dark, the *Òwiwí* is the creative spirit who is always finding opportunities where others only perceive darkness. The owl has the capacity to rotate the head (*orí*) on a flexible neck that orbits perfectly to present both the back and the front views in alignment with side perspectives, bringing together vistas of the past, the present, and the future, like the Orunmila divinity. Popoola postulates the role of the artist as one empowered to raise their voice and advocate for social change. It can be used as a tool for activism, shedding light on important issues, and empowering marginalized communities to fight for their rights in a society marooned in myopia, jaundice, and impending blindness, a citizenry groping around with no insight with which to inform and repair their circumstances.



Plate 15: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: The Cock Crow
Medium: Mixed welded metal
Size: unknown
Year: unknown
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

The cock crow is a piece assemble out of musical instrument, the saxophone and spanner and other discarded metal like bike chains and spoons. The sculptural piece above is rooted in the consciousness for our heritage which is fading away. In Yoruba philosophical belief, cocks are mostly related with time and awareness. The cock crow now reminds us of cultural value which is getting proselytized by our embrace of Western culture in the 21st century. Dotun Popoola calls us into this consciousness by inserting the Ife iconic head of Ori-Olokun into the heart of the cock so as to call our attention into this emerging proselytization of culture that is devaluing our heritage. The use of spoon to depict the cock red flat jaw reminds us of the embrace of Western food over our own indigenous food which serve as a clarion call to all the lovers of Western culture over their own.



Plate 16: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: Amotekun
Size: 12cm (H) x7cm (L) x 4cm (B)
Medium: Mixed media
Year: 2023
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Leopards are renowned for their solitary nature and vast territories, embody strength, vigilance. Amotekun stand as a formidable security outfit in Nigeria which was established in January 2020, by visionary of six state governors. This regional initiative represents a unified commitment to safety and this groups are draw from local hunters, vigilant group and some other relevant groups. Amotekun operation is utilized with diverse expertise who are equipped with

the protection or to safeguard the communities. Impacting the energy, strength and embracing the leopard spirit into the watchful gaze and security thrives of the Amotekun by making it different from every other security operation and this artwork was made from assorted scrapes, auto-base pigment, stainless and acrylic.



Plate 17: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: Saluki Dog
Size: 62cm (H) x 64cm (L) x 30cm (B)
Medium: metal scrap and Assorted color
Year: 2020
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Dotun Popoola Saluki dog is one of the numerous dogs rendered by him. Dotun came from a family of hunter where dogs are used to hunt games which made him familiar with various species of local dogs. Rendering of dogs in welded and painted metal is a reflection of his love for animals, which is one of his preferences as a contemporary metal sculptor. Saluki is a species of dog found in the e Middle East and part of the West, they hunt by sight and not by scent. It was once used by the nomadic tribe to run down animal game. Dotun got attracted to the dog because of it deep chested and long- legged anatomy which makes it elegant and beautiful. The artwork is use to accentuate the relationship that man has with domestic animals and their social symbolism as man’s ageless companion.



Plate 18: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: A.Y.E.K.O.O.T.I.T.O (Parrot)
Size: 2ft (L) x 1ft (B)
Medium: Mixed media
Year: 2020
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

The parrot is known as odidere often called Ayekooto in Yoruba. Ayetooko means the world reject the truth. Parrot is a special bird with many beautiful features and brilliant characteristics that makes it different from just any other bird. The colors combination makes its attractive and it the only animal that mimics human or can talk to human. The Yoruba believe that there is a specific forgotten story behind the naming which explain how human were able to communicate with animals which parrot is a part.



Plate 19: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: Alantakun
Size: 6ft (L) x 6ft (B)
Medium: stainless
Year: 2020
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

Alantakun is a Yoruba name for spider or arachnid, it an eight-legged predatory arachnid with an in segmented body consisting of a fused head and thorax and a rounded abdomen. Spider have fangs that inject poison into their prey and most kind spin webs in which to capture insect. Some people believe spider is used for spiritual purpose since it known for spinning web and if it seen in one's house it considered been trapped and this could be related to relationship, job or other things. Although spider often frighten people but their messages are positive and it can symbolize balance, personal growth and self-awareness. Spider is known for being an intelligent arachnid who is capable of strategizing and planning.



Plate 20: Artist: Dotun Popoola
Title: The Eyo
Size: 6ft (L) x 6ft (B)
Medium: welded metal
Year: 2020
Source: Irin Ajo catalogue

The Eyo festival otherwise known as the Adamu Orisa, a festival unique to Lagos, the word Eyo means the white clad masquerade which represents the spirit of the dead. The costume worn are of brilliant white flowing sweeping robes which conceal them from head to the toe and colorful hat with bold conclave insignia as seen in the artwork but the artist use of colorful outfit is to express the happiness derived whenever the festival take place. Historically Eyo was brought from ijebu to lagos island from Iperu Akesan in the 18th century and the town is considered the cradle of Eyo. Eyo is usually held on a Saturday. Each Eyo comes out of an Iga (palace) of a ruling family in the morning and heads for the shrine (Agodo). It is robed from head to toe in white flowing cloth. The white flowing costume consists of an 'agbada' (the top robe), and the 'aropale' (the bottom wrap around)

Findings and comparison

The Two extremely accomplished artists who have made substantial contributions to the field of welded metal artworks are Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola. Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola are two highly skilled artists who have made significant contributions to the field of welded metal artwork. While both artists utilize the same medium, their approach, style, and themes differ, resulting in distinct bodies of work. Balogun and Popoola make use of junk in executing their metal sculptures that often-incorporated cast non-ferrous alloy, but their works distinctively stands apart in style. Popoola cast alloy is with emphasis on molten metal while that of Balogun rested on welding copper brazed together with the aid of stand by negative mold in achieving his desired taste as in the case of “Supreme Mechanism”

Adeola Balogun is known for his intricate and delicate compositions in welded metal. His sculptures often depict intricate floral patterns and natural forms with a touch of abstraction. Balogun's work showcases a deep understanding of the medium, as he skillfully manipulates metal to create fluid and organic shapes. His ability to bring life and movement to the rigid material is truly remarkable. In contrast, Dotun Popoola takes a more bold and rugged approach to welded metal artwork. His sculptures are characterized by angular lines, sharp edges, and a sense of raw energy. Popoola's work often explores themes of strength, power, and the human form. He uses the medium to convey a sense of tension and dynamism, as his sculptures appear to be frozen in motion.

This duo show excellence in the mastering of their medium of expression when considering the depiction of naturalistic forms in their metal works. Their use of colour is distinctive, beautiful and magnificent way.

Dotun Popoola who was formally trained in Auchi Polytechnic where he specialized in painting and earned a Distinction upon graduation. Famous for the style of engaging brilliant colors and strong draftsmanship tenets, He uses vibrant colors to highlight certain parts of his sculpture by brushing and sometimes flat application of red, orange, cerulean blue, emerald green and white hues of industrial acrylics that makes expression of his works look naturalistic. In comparison to that of Adeola Balogun painting style which takes on a rather flat look that is it's graphical in style and doesn't involve any colour tonal graduations in the use of colours.

Furthermore, the subject matter in Balogun and Popoola's work also differs significantly. Balogun's sculptures often draw inspiration from nature, celebrating the beauty and complexity of the natural world. His attention to detail and ability to capture the delicate intricacies of flowers and plants is truly captivating. On the other hand, Popoola's work focuses more on human emotions and experiences. His sculptures are often figurative, portraying the human figure in various states of tension, struggle, or triumph as seen in his works,” Anatanku,”

4. Conclusion

Welded metal sculpture represents the fusion of artistic inspiration and technical craftsmanship. Through the exploration of historical context, technical approaches, and artistic implications, this article has shed light on the significance of this unique medium. As it continues to evolve and inspire artists worldwide, welded metal sculpture stands as a testament to the limitless potential of human creativity. This comparative analysis of two welded metal sculptors Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola demonstrates the diverse approaches and artistic styles within the field. In summary, while both Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola work with welded metal, their artistic styles, themes, and techniques diverge. Balogun's delicate and intricate compositions celebrate the natural world, while Popoola's bold and angular sculptures explore the human experience. Both artists showcase exceptional craftsmanship, but their unique approaches result in distinct and captivating bodies of work.

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