

EXPRESSION OF NIGER DELTA COLORFUL SCENERY: A STUDIO EXPLORATION WITH ENAMEL PAINT

By

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Abstract

This paper focuses on capturing the vibrant and diverse scenery of The Niger Delta region through the expressive medium of enamel paint. The Niger Delta, renowned for its rich biodiversity and intricate waterways, serves as a profound source of inspiration. The paper aims to convey the essence and richness of the region's landscapes, flora, and fauna using a bold and colourful palette. By experimenting with various techniques and applications of enamel paint, the artist seeks to evoke the unique atmosphere and character of the Niger Delta in their artwork through a series of studio explorations, the vivid hues and dynamic compositions of the Niger Delta's environment are captured and reinterpreted. Through this process, the paper not only celebrates the natural beauty of the region but also reflects on the cultural and environmental significance of the Niger Delta. Enamel paint, with its lustrous finish and durability, which proves to be an idea medium for conveying the intensity and resilience of the Niger Delta's landscapes. In conclusion, through the exploration of the Niger Delta's colorful scenery using enamel paint, which are bold and vibrant evokes a sense of vitality and richness, reflecting the diverse landscape found in the Niger Delta. Thus, it is recommended that experimentation with different applications of enamel paint to capture the nuances and

intricacies of the Niger Delta scenery should be embraced highlighting the beauty and significance of this unique region.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Expression, Scenery and Enamel Paint.

Introduction

The Niger Delta area of Nigeria previously was richly blessed with rich flora and fauna before the exploration of oil activities in the area. Reflections of the rich mangrove swamp and wet land scenery usually seem to be very interesting and alluring aesthetically. This situation is particularly synonymous with the Ijaw riverine areas of the Niger Delta. According to Ndimele, Kari and Ayowo (2009:69) the Ijaw people of southern Nigeria predominantly occupy the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ndimele, Kari and Ayowo and that the Ijaws are scattered in six states in Nigeria. These were the states previously recognized as the Niger Delta states but today for administrative conveniences Imo and Abia States are also included as Niger Delta State because they produce oil just like the other Niger Delta States. According to Kpone – Tonwe and Gbeneye (2009) The Niger Delta has a span of over 70,000 square kilometers and four ecological zones. Kpone-Tonwe and Gbeneye add that the area has a population of about seven million.

Not minding the other states which have been included as Nigeria Delta states, this study focused more on the Eastern Ijaw Niger Delta areas. The Eastern Ijaw Niger Delta area of Nigeria is not just an oil producing area of Nigeria, but a place blessed with good vegetation, wet land, rivers and oceans. Okonny (2002:8) states that the eastern Niger Delta environment typifies interactions between a natural system and man. Okonny adds that it is an area with numerous rivers, creeks and streams creating a water environment. Okonny also explained that among the inputs to this water environment and rainfall, wind currents, geographical location, erosion ability of the rivers, their sediment load and discharge patterns.

Despite accolades that the Niger Delta environment has gotten due to its flora, observation in recent times has shown that activities of oil exploration have adversely affected and destroyed most of their fine colourful flora in the area. Environmentalists largely blame the cause of the

environmental devastation the Niger Delta as a result of uncontrolled gas flaring and oil spillage which has overtime caused a lot of environmental pollution and degradation in the area.

This study is centered on painterly produce a painting that reflections the Niger Delta scenery as a way of documenting the scenery for posterity, using a studio exploration technique with enamel paint. Studio exploration with enamel paint in this study, had to so with the adventuring with enamel paint to produce painting. This is because according to the Encarta Dictionary (2000). Explorations has to do with journeying, discovery and adventure among others. Enamel paint according to Wikipedia (2015:1) is paint that is air dries to a hard, usually glossy, finish used for coating surfaces that are outdoors or otherwise subjects the hard ware or variations in temperature; it should not be confused with decorated objects in “painted enamel”, where vitreous kiln. Wikipedia add that the term enamel paint” it used to describe oil-based covering products, usually with a significant – mount of glass in them, however recently many latex or water – based paints have adopted the term as well. Wikipedia further add that although “enamel” and painted enamel” in art normally referred to vitreous enamel in the 20th century some artists used commercial enamel paints in art, including Pablo Picasso (mixing it with oil paint), Hermann-Paul, Jackson Pollock, and Sidney Nolan.

In the same vein, Fichner –Rathus (2007:543) Enamel means to apply a hard glossy coating to a surface; a coating of this type. Kleiner and Mauiya (2006:238) also states that enamel is decorative coatings, usually coloured, fused on to the surface of metal, glass or ceramics. Deducing from all the meaning cited from the different authors it is obvious that enamel is paint, which was comes in colours with a gossy effect and can be applied on a different surfaces tike – metal, wood, canvas, etcetera. The desire to use enamel pint to produce the painting that reflects the colourful Niger Delta Scenery is to encourage more artist to explore with the enamel paint to produce painting because it is more economical compared to artist oil tube pigments. Also, as part of the exploration brush was use for mixing the enamel paint and at the same time it was use for the painting.

A Brief Historical Overview of Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region has a population, of about 34 million people and covers an area of about 70,000sq km. the people live in a few' large cities and covers 3,000 small and often remote communities villages in the mangrove, swamp and lowland rain forests. Farming and fishing are the main economic activities dominate the urban areas. The terrain is extremely difficult and a substantial portion of the region falls under the world's fragile ecosystem". Many communities live along creeks and are accessible only by boats. The riverine communities are particularly vulnerable to climate changes and manmade disasters (floods, sea encroachment, pol pollution, piracy, hostage taking, commercial conflicts etc.). Oil exploration started in the Niger Delta region in the late 1930s and oil was found in commercial quality in 1956 at the village of Oloibiri. Since then oil production has increased significantly. (Oshodi, 2010:1).

Wikipedia (2009:1) also states that the Niger Delta is the delta of the Niger River at the Gult of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Niger. Wikipedia add that it is a very densely populated region sometimes called the oil rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. Wikipedia also add that historical and cartographically, it consist of present-day Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States, but in 2000, however Obasenjo's regime included Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross Rivers State, Edo, Imo and Ondo states in the region. This Osungade (2008:1) also affirms that currently the states of the Niger Delta are Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers State.

The region over the years has suffered serious environmental challenges which have led to poverty and environmental degradation. According to Oshodi (2010:1) the Niger Delta region is faced with a lot of development and environmental challenges in agricultural production, low level of industrial activities, environmental degradation and social conflict. All these challenges which in recent times are seriously, confronting the region are largely blamed on the discovery and exploration of oil in the region. Because the discovery and the exploration activities of oil have damage the ecosystem of the people thereby making it obstruct the development of the area. Thus, in bid to salvage the situation of environmental degradation and destruction of the Niger Delta by oil companies a lot protests have been carried out in the Niger Delta by

different protestors and militant groups over the years. Only in 2006 according Wikipedia (2009) militant group like the movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) resorted to taking foreign employees of oil companies' hostage. The Asari Dokubo Niger Delta Volunteer Force" too in the Niger Delta was also another militant group that protested against human rights violation and environmental destruction by the oil companies in the Niger Delta.

The activities of the militant groups in the area cause a lot of unrest and also affected production of oil by the companies in the area. Interestingly, to bring peace in the area, the former late President Umaru Musa Yardua in his wisdom break out a peace deal by granting amnesty to the angry militant youth, which today has created some level of peace in the area.

To show some of the levels of damage the Niger Delta environment has witnessed and suffered, as earlier mentioned the study is interested in producing a painting which will represent the Niger Delta scenery as it were to give opportunity for more persons to have an idea of the Niger Delta area in Nigeria.

Reflections and sceneries of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta Sceneries reflects cities, towns, communities and villages which are in some cases becomes by mangrove swamp, lowland ram forest. The region also have farming. And fishing activates, oil exploration activities and importantly, some part of the region especially the Ijaw Rivers and Bayelsa areas has natural rich flora, fauna, rivers, seas and ocean which makes the area distinct from other regions of the country. Below are some pictorials which reflect some scenery of the Niger Delta:

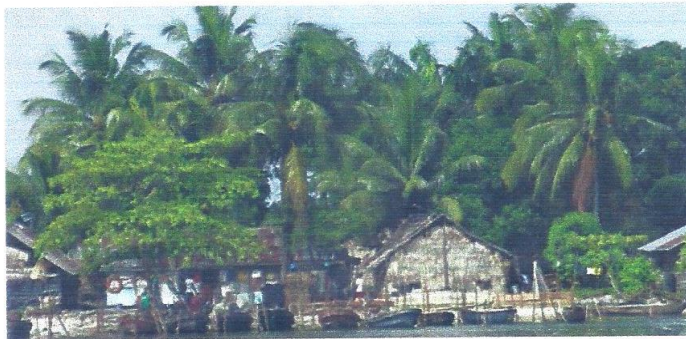


Plate I picture of a fishing settlement showing the flora, fauna and habitable environment before oil exploration in the Niger Delta region. Obtained from South South Regional Guide (2017)



Plate 3: Crude Oil bunkering site



*Plate 3: Gas Pollution Site.
Obtained from The Guardian
(2016)*

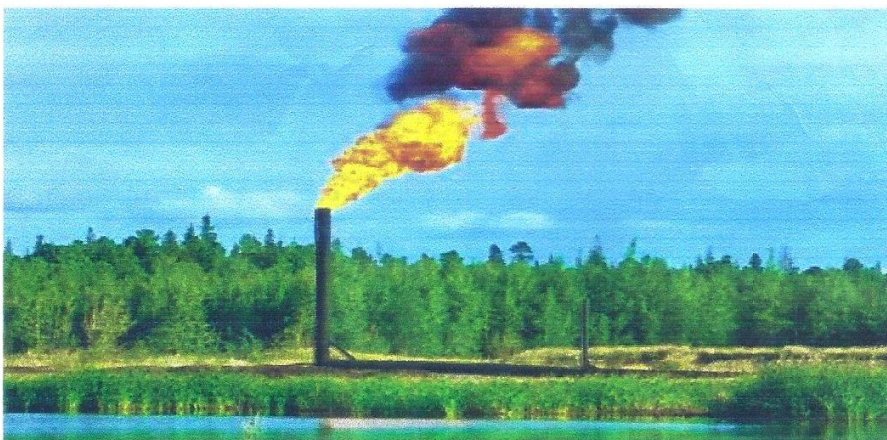


Plate 4: Gas site. Obtained from Udoma(2017)

An Overview of Studio Exploration with Enamel Paint.

Previously, only but few artist neither explores, experiment nor even with enamel paint to express themselves artistically on different surfaces. Today the trend is changing because more artist are beginning to explore with it. And in using the media in the past, one person who made using the medium popular was Johnson Pollock who did a lot of exploration and painted with enamel paint on canvas.

Honor and Fleming (2002:924) State that enamel is a vitreous substance that can be fused to a metal surface under heat. Enamel Paint is a term that is used to reference with a hard, glossy and opaque finish actually, the term “enamel paint” does not necessarily have a generally accepted or standardized definition, historically, and enamel paint has been used to refer to any type of enamel paint that is oil based and with a considerably glossy finish.

However, due to the rising popularity of latex and water based paints: the term enamel paint has since evolved to refer to a hard surfaced paint with gloss finish. In addition, the term is used to refer to enamel paint brands that are in quality (Admin, 2013:1). Also adds that commercial enamel paints have been used in artwork by many famous artists over the years. Admin further points out that Pablo Picasso is one of such artist who is known to have used a commercial paint by the name of “Ripolin” that is not even meant for use in artwork. Admin also points out that Sidney Nolan and Herman – Paul also used enamel to paint. One very interesting thing to note about using enamel paint is that enamel paint has a wide spectrum of colors which make it easy for the artist to paint with it. It also gives a glossy finish to an artwork. Since it is liquid based, it is easy to mix to achieve the particular colors needed for applying on canvas.

According Admin (2013) enamel paint is more durable after it has dried. Enamel paint have a lot of functions, it is use for painting homes (indoors and Outdoors), it preventive coverage’s and colours retention as corrosion resistance as well as rust preventive properties. After using it to paint and when it is dry’, It allows repeated washing of surfaces without causing any damage to the surface in the paint is applied. Although, this must be done with some level of caution, it is also interesting to note that enamel paint comes in oil-based and water based. The oil based enamel paints have the

advantage of delivering a higher-gloss finish. They are also easier to apply using a spray gun and easier to smooth. The drawback to oil-based [paints] is that they must be cleaned away using mineral spirit. Water –based enamel paint typically do not deliver an extremely glossy finish but can be cleaned up with soap and water. For the purpose of this study oil-based enamel paint was used for the exploration.

An overview color, its connotation and symbolism in the Niger Delta

Colours is the most noticeable thing one will witness in every environment and it is made possible due to light reflection. If there is no light and there is darkness no one can identify any color. Colours according to Hornby (2010) is the property possessed by an object producing different sensation on the eyes as a result of the way it reflect or emits light. Grave (1971) posit that color can be explained pigment ally or physiology. Orubu (2016:39) states that colours is one of the elements of art which affects our emotions and feeling and a very pertinent medium of expression of cultural values. Today people now have better consciousness about colours in our society, because they can distinguish or identify one colours from another.

The effect to make people have such consciousness was made possible due to the contribution of some theorist like Geo the among others. In the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria even before the advent of westerners in their land the people have being using colours which they derive from plants and from other things from their environment to paint on their houses and even on their bodies for purification, sacrifice and sometimes for decoration.

Importantly, the colours they use usually have connotations and symbolism. For instance, green colour connotes or symbolize fertility, freshness and growth. While red symbolizes danger, fire, blood, charm and ritual. Dappa (2003) opines black symbolizes death, war and mourning. Dappa also state that yellow connotes and symbolizes joy and happiness in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta coastal region is blessed with green mangrove vegetable and with fine bluish rivers which give the place the fine aesthetics to admire. But in recent times all is beginning to fade away due to oil exploration activities in the area. The mangrove tree and fine vegetation are all almost gone because of environmental pollution. Therefore, to

preserve a reminiscence of the environment is one reason why this study is carried out.

Methodology of Studio Exploration Approach with Enamel Paint

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, studio exploration research method was adopted for the study. Thus, below are the procedures that were taken to produce the paintings:

Step 1: This step deals with the preparation of support canvas for the production of *painting*.



Step 11: This deals with sketching of the Niger Delta scenery on canvas which transfer to the prepared canvas.



Step 111: This step deals with the application of the mixed enamel paint on the prepared canvas in which you have the sketches of the Niger Delta scenery.



Step IV: This deals with framing and finishing of the painting.



Conclusion

The Niger Delta area of Nigeria is usually a mangrove, wet land and rain forest area. The area was previously richly endowed with aesthetically alluring flora and fauna. But in recent time, oil exploration activities in the area is beginning to change the situation; thus, to preserve the original scenery the researcher was inspired to used enamel paint to paint and document the reflection of the scenery. The need to use enamel paint was born out the various scheme of colours and the glossy effect the finishing of the painting gives to the work. Although some persons say that, the medium of enamel paint is not very common just like other painting mediums, but is has been out to use a long time ago by artist like Pablo Picasso, Hermann Paul, Jackson Pollock and Sidney Nolan.

Another very crucial reason for using this medium to carry out this study is to encourage artist to explore and experiment with other media, so that they will not be just limited to one medium. And is because if they can't find the only medium nor material they are only you to, to work with it will affect their continuous practice as artist. Thus, the study hopes to stand out to encourage exploration with enamel paint to produce painting for the expression of artist in our society to document our environment, events and activities.

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