

Original Research Article

'Translation' of Children's Pre-schematic Art to Designs for Printed Textiles

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Artists are constantly in search of fresh ideas for their creations. The search often times produces design data that add novelty to their repertoire and this has been noticed in both ancient and modern arts. Having noticed that children's art have been copied by adults and utilized for gainful designs without acknowledgement or reward, this writer was motivated into looking at the possibilities of using the drawings and paintings of children at their pre-schematic stage of creative development, for printed textiles, with due acknowledgement. This paper is a product of research through informal children's art workshops carried out in rural and urban areas in Enugu and Akwa Ibom states of Nigeria between 1993 and 1994. Selected works from the children were subjected to studio experimentation to create designs suitable for printed textiles. Findings show that the struggle at representation reflected in the drawings of this group and their bizarre use of colour has presented peculiar effects needed for designing printed textiles. It is the belief of the researcher that the final products borrowing from the children's intellectual property will appeal to everyone.

Keywords: Children, Pre-schematic, Arts, Designs, Printed textiles, Translation

INTRODUCTION

Child art as a subject has been of interest to scholars as indicated by the available historical records. Yanin (1985) writes that the earliest known child drawings on record are the seven hundred year old drawings of a very young boy called Onfim, done along writing exercises in medieval Russia. The author, a prominent archaeologist also explains that the drawings were pressed into birch bark and not written in ink. This shows that hundreds of years ago, children were doing what they do today. Harris (1963) opines that Corrado Ricci (1887) published an account of the drawings by a group of Italian children and he reasons that the collection of children's drawings is probably the earliest of which we have record. The claims by these authors show that child art has always been of interest and has been noticed and appreciated by scholars.

Researchers' interests in child art, however, are diverse. Several writers have written on child art as a subject, such as Jefferson (1959) who was interested in the techniques of teaching arts to children. Jameson (1968) was more interested in pre-school and infant art which are mostly scribbles, while Palmer (1970) worked extensively on the art of the young adolescent. The writer who is widely acclaimed to be one of those who have done a lot of successful research on children is Viktor Lowenfeld, who not surprisingly was an artist and a psychologist. His works on creative and mental growth have been published by Lambert Brittain, who serves as a co-

author. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) had the purpose of providing the means by which adults could serve as catalysts in making the child's life richer and more meaningful through understanding their art in relationship with creation and growth. The present research benefited from their categorization of children where pre-schematic group is placed between the ages of four and seven.

The literature written few years before the present study is by Korzenik (1991) which asked a question 'Is children's work art?'. The writer argues to show that child art should be given its proper place in the field of art instead of being seen as something abnormal.

Apart from studies on child art itself, the subject has been applied to other studies, like intelligence issues, Goodenough (1926) worked on the measurement of intelligence by assessing the development speed using children's drawings as a measure of intellectual maturity. Clerk and Zimmerman (1983) on the other hand tried to find out why artistically talented children are not given special attention in schools. They argue that being handicapped is not only an issue for children with learning or physical disabilities. It is also an issue for children with learning with special talents or extraordinary learning abilities. Other interesting applications of child art include those done with therapy. Kagan (1971) goes into the possibilities of understanding children in terms of behavior,

motives and thought using their creative manifestations. Sheinak (1980) exposes the process of the use of art as therapy especially for children. This therapy process generally involves using children's drawings to understand their fears, experiences, relationships and mental development. The closest documented experiment to the present study is recorded by Dendel (1974) who records that Julia George spread a wide piece of muslin over a table and asked her kindergarten pupils to pick up felt-tip pens and draw whatever they liked on the cloth. The result, according to her, was that the fabric was completely covered with bright designs, some of which were upside down because the children worked around the table. She also adds that the enchanting result was made into a dress.

Despite the series of work done on child art, proper documentation and acknowledgement of the individual child artist, have not been done. Besides, some adults copy and use child art for designs on surfaces including fabrics for their own benefits. The present paper, therefore, is an attempt at the possibility of using the drawings and paintings of male and female children of the pre-schematic age group as motifs for the design of printed textiles aimed at various end uses, with due acknowledgement. This paper benefits from library research and informal children's art workshops conducted in Akwa Ibom and Enugu states of Nigeria between 1993 and 1995.

The presentation is done in textual and pictorial forms. It is possible to use children's three-dimensional arts as bases for an adult's creations, but the present experiment was delimited to children's two-dimensional arts and only from the pre-schematic age bracket of four to seven years. It is expected that this paper will add to the existing texts on child arts and the practical experimental output will be of benefit to researchers, artists and the global community.

DRAWINGS OF THE PRE-SCHEMATIC GROUP

Members of this group fall between the ages of four to seven. At this period, the scribbles associated with an earlier group assume forms and start to make more sense to adult judgment. By this time, the child has not yet seen the need to arrange his drawing space. Talking about children in the earlier part of this group, Plaskow (1968) writes "As he becomes aware that the mark appears on his paper when he applies pressure and moves the instrument, he learns to become the master of the mark he makes. This enormous step forward in development is natural to all children who are given the opportunity".

Gaitskell (1975) writing about the pre-schematic age bracket which he terms 'manipulative stage' states "They manipulate materials in exploratory and random fashion". The researcher of this paper has discovered that the struggle at representation reflected in the drawings of this group has presented peculiar effects needed for textile design. The researcher utilized the drawings of Emem Asukwo Udo and Amarachi Ekere who were both five years old (see illus. 1), to compose a repeating design which was textured with scribbles from an earlier group. See plate 1.

Use of Colour at the Pre-Schematic Stage

At this stage of creative development, it is noticed that children tend to be more pre-occupied with their experimentation at representation. They seem to be entirely absorbed in their attempts at creating forms. In their painting, or better put, given colours, they do not mind the disparity between colours used to

paint an object and the true colours of object represented. A child at this stage, making a painting of his father or mother does not see anything wrong in using blue, green or red as the colour for the skin. A study by Marshall (1954) made a comparison and found that the use of colour by some pre-schematic artists is akin to that of adult schizophrenics. The above study does not conclude that colours do not have any significance to the child using them. A study by Lawler and Lawler (1963) found out that nursery school children of about the age of four selected yellow crayon to colour a happy picture, whereas, the same picture was painted brown if the child was told a sad story. Writing about this group, Gaitskell (1975) notes "When they paint, they do not only give a greater size to the object that appeals to them but also may paint it in a favourite colour".

There seem to be many reasons for a child's choice of colour at the pre-schematic stage of development. The size, shape and convenience of holding a wax crayon, pastel or brush may be the reason for the choice of colour and the meaning of colours tends to be highly individualized. The difference in consistency of hues of a liquid colour may be the reason for the colour preferred by a child. One example was the painting of Manyor Umoh where a glass bottle was painted green and purple with outlines and shading in black while windows of a house were in red, green, yellow and purple. These go to confirm the results of some of the researches cited. Amarachi Ekere did his own painting of an orange with orange colour which is quite comfortable for the fruit. In the present study, the largely non-representational colours were used for a design of a necktie fabric. See plate 2.

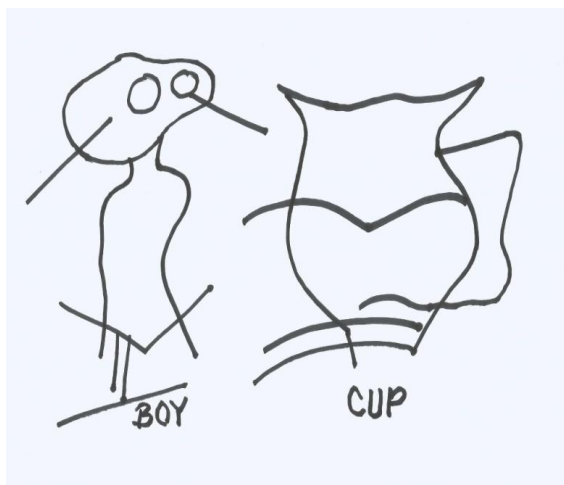
SAMPLES OF RURAL PRE-SCHEMATIC ART AND TRANSLATION FOR PRINTED TEXTILES

The basic difference between the rural and urban child-artists' works in this group seems to be the themes of their drawings. Female rural artists tend to draw most of their themes from nature and traditional female chores.. Tiles like "Women carrying firewood", "Women carrying water", and "Girls going to the stream" recur in most of their works. Male artists in the rural areas also tend to draw most of their themes from rural activities. Masculine activities in the rural setting reflect in their ideas. See illus. 2 and Plate 3.

SAMPLES OF URBAN PRE-SCHEMATIC ARTS AND TRANSLATION INTO PRINTED TEXTILE DESIGNS

The urban pre-schematic child artists do their drawings and paintings with the same semi-representation format like their rural counterparts. However, the slight peculiarity is noticed in the themes of their work. In the course of the informal workshops which were conducted by this writer to acquire samples of works for this research, the child-artists in this category chose themes like 'television set', 'Tooth paste', 'Cups', 'Boxes', and of course, the normal recurring themes like 'Myself', 'My mother', 'My father', 'My friend', 'My teacher' 'Man', 'Woman', 'Girl', and 'Boy'.

Samples of urban pre-schematic drawings are shown in Illus. 3. It is worthy of note that some of the drawings were done in sand, using sticks or fingers, thus the need for copying. The utilization of urban pre-schematic drawings for textile design is shown in Plate 1.



Illus. 1. Emem Asuquo's 'Boy' and Amarachi Ekere's 'Cup'. Copied by the author, from drawings in sand



Plate 1. Johnson Ekanem, 'Design adapted from urban pre-schematic group', Gouache, 75cm x 35cm, 1995.
Courtesy: The Author, 2016.

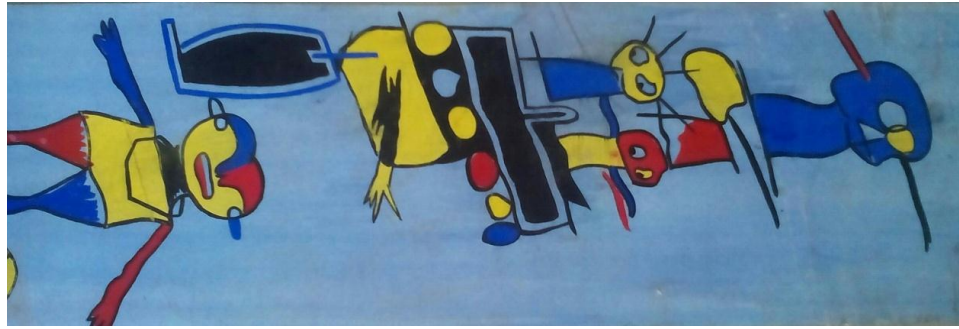
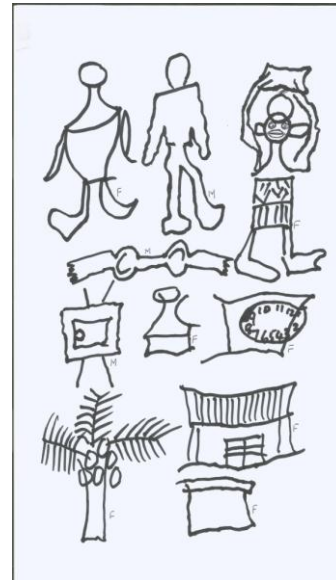


Plate 2. Johnson Ekanem, 'Necktie Fabric', Gouache', 90cm x 30cm, 1995. Courtesy: The Author, 2016.



Plate3.Original Samples of Rural Pre-schematic Art.



Illus. 2.Copied samples from untidy surfaces.

Courtesy: The author, 2016.



Illus.3. Samples of urban pre-schematic drawings copied by the researcher for clarity

FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOPS AND STUDIO EXPERIMENTATIONS

The major findings from the study go to confirm most of the researches in child art cited earlier in the paper. The effect of pre-schematic child art on design, considering gender and working environment can best be observed and appreciated from the illustrations and the translated designs for textiles. In the pre-schematic age grouping, there are no obvious differences between male and female drawings and paintings, but the titles given to works by the children show they recognize the gender factor.

The urban males prefer to represent locomotives, electronic and electrical gadgets, while the rural counterparts go for general rural themes. There is a general comical effect on the designs created from the works of the entire pre-schematic artists. This seems to arise from the semi-abstracted nature of some of their forms. Like some of the other stages of children's creative development, pre-schematic children prefer their colours bold and bright. Mattaie (1971) states 'when children are left to themselves begin to use tints, they never spare vermilion and red lead'. Likewise Udosen (1993) adds that children's 'loud' colours can be compared to Merriam Makeba's songs which involves shouting but still maintain her beauty.

Apart from studies of the forms, the adaptation of children's choice of colour is the main thrust of this research. This was why the researcher provided for most of the children in the workshop to use water colour and gouache with brushes, though this experience was frightful to children who had never used painting brush before the workshop.

The initial proposal of this research included applying the resultant designs in the production of surface-decorated fabrics meant for dress wear in all its ramifications. Some of the designs were actually introduced on fabrics through the processes of dyeing and printing. It is worth noting also that this study has not exhausted the possibilities in the translation of child art for textile design because textile design does not end at printed textiles for dress wears.

The area of woven designs and other methods of fabric construction can also benefit from the adaptations. From the results of the adaptation, there is no doubt that designs created from pre-schematic child art can be used for tufted designs for carpets and towels, woven designs like brocades, furnishing designs, felted designs, knitted designs and tapestries.

CONCLUSION

One of the motivating factors for this study was the desire to push the sourcing of design concepts for textiles beyond the known conventional boundaries into novel frontiers. The researcher therefore would like to stress the need for designers in the field of textiles and related fields of study to go into unconventional themes to help increase the repertoire of design ideas and data base for the present and posterity. This study considered only normal children in the pre-schematic bracket, but it is the belief of the researcher that works of abnormal or extraordinary pre-schematic children may also provide motifs of interest to adult designers.

The three-dimensional works of these children can also be projected into two-dimension and still used as textile motifs. This study has exposed the fact that it is quite deceptive and delicate to place children into developmental stages. Children between the ages of four and seven years are pre-schematic. Those at ages four and seven are at the border lines, and their

manifestations fluctuate between what obtains in their proper group and adjacent groups. In as much as it is possible to force their manifestation into envisaged age bracket, the differences in the speed of development of individual children demands that only the performance of the middle liners can better classify the group. For the pre-schematics, ages five and six are ideal. Ages four and seven can suffer what this researcher calls 'boarder-line syndrome'. It is interesting and rewarding to adapt child art for adult work, but the bottom line is that Children whose intellectual property is used should be rewarded, and acknowledged.

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