

SEYI ODUKOYA

Nigeria

Contemporary African Art

Seyi Odukoya is a visionary artist whose work seamlessly bridges the realms of tradition and modernity. With a distinctive style deeply rooted in cultural nuance, his creations delve into themes of identity, nature, and the interplay between history and the present. Drawing inspiration from personal experiences and global perspectives, his art resonates as a vibrant dialogue of colors, forms, and emotions. Each piece serves as a testament to his pursuit of meaning, connection, and the transformative power of creativity.



„My work does not only explore the relationship between the human heart and human facial expressions but also the relationship between man and his environment. As a multi-versatile artist, my approach to painting has always been spontaneous. I'm interested in the moment because I am compelled to engage the human mind to see the beauty that lies within and to call those things that are not as though they were by employing bold brush strokes that curve into a melodious symphony and rhythm that create soulful meditation for the viewers.“

Interview

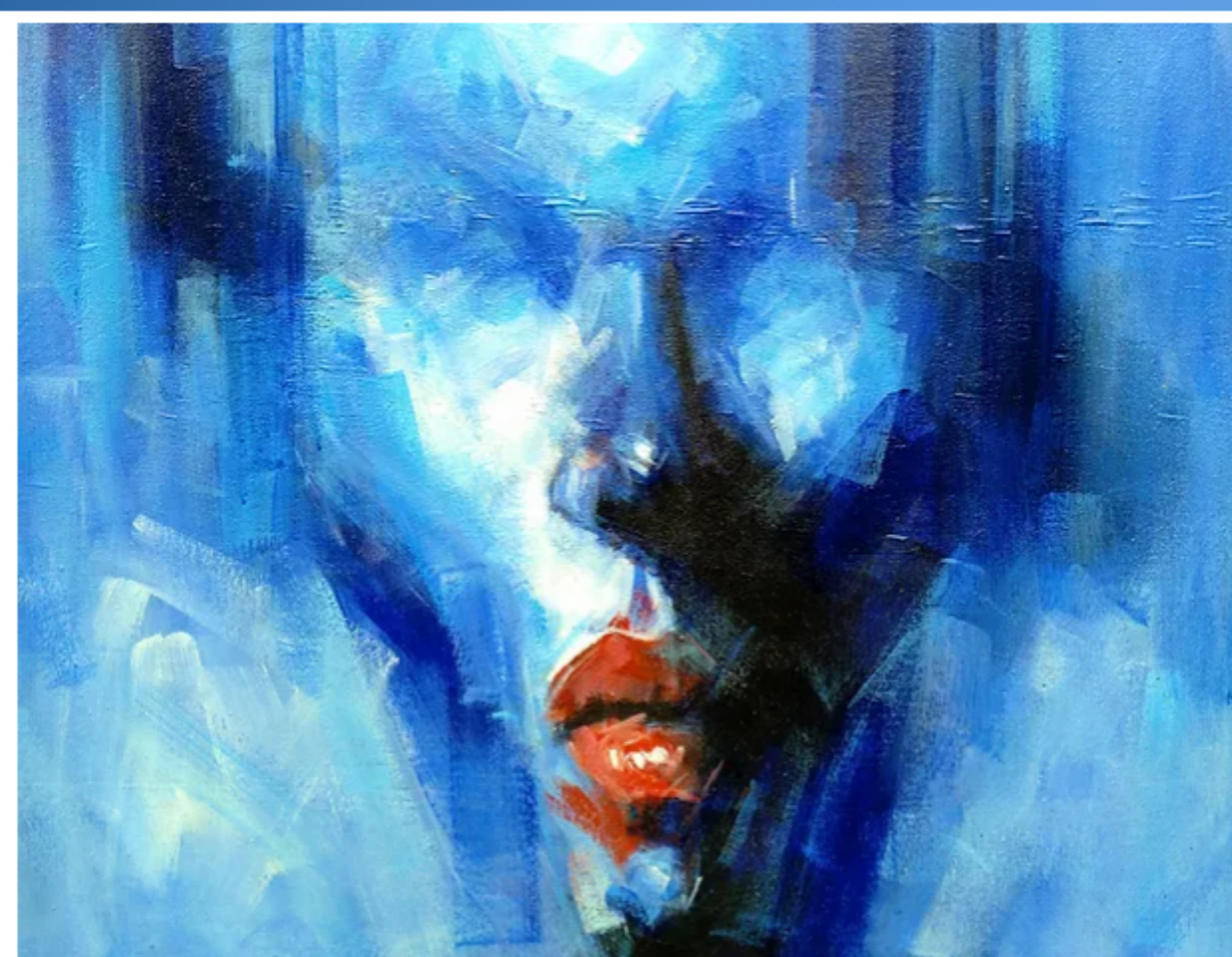


What initially drew you to the world of art, and how has your passion evolved over the years?

„The passion for art started from a very tender age I guess. I remember one time, my mum told me how I used to draw her with the subtle tribal marks on her face and also used all her letter-headed papers for business to draw. I also think, then, I would draw on any surface I see, just to be able to express the gift within me. At that time, I wasn't exposed to the art industry and didn't know anybody that is into art until much later, when I was in primary school. Over the years, my passion for art began to grow when I was in primary school, as we call it here in Nigeria. Then I met people like me who also have the same talent I do, and so we would challenge one another by drawing comics using our notebooks and the likes to tell stories, and then we would share the stories. I tell you, those were the formative periods of my artistic journey.“

Which cultural influences have shaped your artistic style the most, and how do you weave them into your work?

The cultural influences that have shaped my artistic style... Hmm! In Africa, especially in Nigeria, we have 3 major tribes. We have the Igbos, Yorubas and the Hausas. Each of them has a unique and distinct culture that has influenced the majority of the artists in Nigeria. Our culture is so beautiful that it compels one to inculcate them into every work of art. For me, it becomes so easy because there is already a "way", and then all I need to do is juxtapose and weave them into every fabric of my works.



Are there any artists or movements that have significantly inspired you, and what have you taken from their influence?

Of course, there are many artists, including art movements, that have had a great influence and impact on my life and works. The Expressionism movement is one of them. I'm always fascinated with heavy brushwork or strokes. Like I say jokingly, if you want to have me kidnapped, just surround me with works that have heavy brush strokes in them, and you'd have me right where you want me. Lol. The works of Harley Brown, the famous pastel Mogul, Jimmy Law, Ryan Hewett, Peter Pharaoh, Renata Brzozowska, and many more have had a great influence on my works.

How do you navigate creative challenges, and in what ways do they contribute to your growth as an artist?

How I navigate creative challenges, and how they contribute to my growth. I think that's a common thing for all creatives. Every artist goes through one form of challenge or the other. For me, what I do is to get my mind on something else. I tend to read, pray or do something other art. Sometimes, I take a walk out of the studio to places, and visit friends. So by that time, I return to the studio refreshed and energized, ready to take off again.

What role do personal experiences and emotions play in your creative process?

My experiences and emotions play a lot in my creative process. Most times, my works are a reflection of my thoughts, experiences and even my devotion.

How does your work stand out in terms of cultural or stylistic diversity compared to others in your field?

It's very easy to notice my works and that's because of the theme and my style of approach towards them. I'm an artist of few words. Lol.

What messages or changes do you aim to convey through your art, whether on a personal, social, or global level?

The messages behind my works are very important to me because, through them, I want to pass a message across to let everyone know that they are not alone in their struggles, pain, disappointment, etc. I want people to recognize the fact that, they are not alone in this world and the storm will be over.



How do you select the themes or subjects for your pieces, and what inspires your artistic direction?

Selecting a theme or subject is very easy for me, so to speak because I read the Bible a lot. My inspiration comes mainly from there, especially from the Psalms and other books too and that inspires my artistic direction because I don't have to struggle to know where I'm going. I just walk straight to the canvas and create that which I have conceived while reading and meditating.

In what ways do your creations connect the past with the present?

That's very easy, through the theme and the title my works carry.

What are your ambitions for future projects, and how would you like to be perceived as an artist?

I would love to work on a series of projects. Though, it's not something I'm anxious or worried about at the moment. I would love to collaborate with other artists too, through residency and also exchanging cultural views and values on matters that pertain to life. Most importantly for me, I want to use the vast majority of my works to preach the good news. I want people to be able to look me in the face one day and say to me, "...one of your paintings healed me of an emotional trauma, mended my broken heart, renewed my hope, gave me the strength to carry on," etc that would be my joy to know that people can relate and also connect with my works irrespective of the Tribe, Nation and Cultural diversity, etc



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