

Semiotic Interpretation of 'Glitch Art' in Selected Paintings of Two Nigerian Artists to Locate the Zeitgeist of Generation-Z Cohorts in Nigeria

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Abstract

Glitch art as an emerging art trend currently drives new creative impulse among generation-z demographic cohorts and captures the hyperpop fascination of the post-digital age culture. This paper aims to put the emergent artistic style of glitch art and its semiotics in dialogue in order to understand the attitudinal dimensions that manifest itself among young contemporaries in Nigeria. By implication, the essay is not a general reflection on glitch art as an expressive trend. Rather, it is a semiotic interpretation, via the pragmatic approach, of some visual artworks that adopt the glitch art creative style to capture the essential Nigerian society. Coming from the standpoint of semiotics as a tool of interpretation of the works of arts, the paper will interrogate some selected paintings, reference the glitch aesthetics as an underpinning for the understanding of the concept of “aesthetics of failure.” “Aesthetics of Failure” as a theoretical framework enunciated by Kim Cascone supports the time frame of the Gen-Z cohorts in Nigeria and therefore provides understanding to some young people's predilections towards loud sounds, bright colors and reversing glitches as regular lifestyle. The paper will present the concept of interpretation in the Visual Arts practitioners as a tool to investigate the emergence of a new artistic subgenre and aptly capture the attitudinal dimensions of Gen-Z generational cohorts within a contemporary Nigerian context.

Keywords: *Sign, Semiotics, Contemporary, Glitch Art, Hyperpop culture*

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Background to the Study

True to Marshall McLuhan's prophecy of an electronically interconnected global village, the breathtaking advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) gadgetry have fast warded the fulfillment of McLuhan's vision. In the same vein, the globe has become a hive of activity with humans struggling to catch up with its flux. Since after the turn of the millennium, there has been a flurry of changes which evidently mark the contemporary era as different from the postmodern and erstwhile sociocultural expressions. In summary, the post-industrial era and the Information Age are two distinct periods in history. Though, the postindustrial and Information ages appear to be coevals in features, there are distinct characteristic differences; shifting from service-based economy through traditional industries to information and device centered economy. ICT as the technology behind the current rupture has brought about significant changes that go far beyond the previous industrial and post-industrial eras of the modern and postmodern periods. This is partly due to the imbrication of computer and its miniaturized avatars to the existing advancements in information technology and the subversion of its original intent by a hyper-mobile young generation. The result is a remarkable attitudinal and paradigmatic shift that has spawned new genres and microgenres in the creative arts through the computer system. One of these changes that could provide a marker for the era is the serendipitous appropriation of glitches by the young members of our society from information technology devices to evoke *anemoia*. This has been identified by scholars and practitioners in the arts as well as the general public with many terms ranging from Glitch Art, Glitchcore, Glitch-alike to Digicore with its ramifications in music, fashion, film, art and lifestyle in general. The state of *anemoia* in glitch art simultaneously accords it a futuristic quality (as the art-style of the future generation), and a retro (from the past) to the emergent style. By evoking *anemoia*, glitch art taps from a nostalgic feeling of a distant past never experienced by the young members of the world to problematize this artistic use of computer mistakes as a penumbral feature of a generational cohort. The phenomenal shift derived from aestheticizing technological mistakes and its unintended consequences references the current hypermobile technocultural tilt.

It stands to reason that problematizing the artistic use of computer glitch in this essay, insofar as the computer bestrides a salient position in the materiality of the current sociotechnical systems, will surely open up deeper understanding of the present and future time. This paper, therefore, seeks to interrogate a) how the adoption of computer glitch by some Nigerian-born artists captures a certain feature of the Gen-Z cohort, b) how this expressive appropriation from technological mistakes characterizes a differential identity of the Gen-Z from extant generational cohorts, and c) how these influences were addressed in the works of some Nigerian artists even without their conscious effort. There are significant political, ethical, aesthetic, and other implications that inspire scholars, curators, artists, musicians, professionals and amateurs towards its potentials for expression and interrogation. A typical example is an exhibition titled "Glitch: Art and Technology" curated by Shiva Balaghi through which she used the figure of glitch to reference "the bond between technical devices, our bodies, the material world we inhabit, and assorted, mostly digital, artistic practices" (Gaafar, 421, 2010). To a great extent, Balaghi's curation largely enlightened our understanding of the scope of glitch art to include not only arts derived through the glitch

simulacra but also works with its conceptual framings and their evidentiary aesthetics. The researchers therefore decided to expand this topic by pulling the related strands of hyperpop and the Gen-Z cohort as being germane to understanding current sociocultural happenings in Nigeria as a global phenomenon.

Glitch in computer is mostly manifested as iterations of loud noise, bright colours, simulated textures and random movements. This transient fault in computer systems is currently a source for creative appropriation into creative elements in music, fine art, film, fashion, performance and other creative expressions by mostly young members of our society. Despite manifesting itself in lifestyle and creative ventures of the youths, it has both aesthetic and political underpinnings for understanding the worldview of the young members of the globe. The symbolism of the age cohort involved in this creative resourcing from the computer system's malfunction and its pervasive influence on the general lifestyle of contemporary young people are the reasons for a semiotic investigation as a way of understanding critical issues of cultural production and consumption. This is what the micro-sound producer Kim Cascone had called "the aesthetics of failure" when interrogating early 21st-century appropriation of the digital culture into a present post-digital daily lifestyle. He traced how some technological malfunctions such as glitches, bugs, application errors, system crashes, quantization and others have intersected with the creative field. These sometimes transient and jolting errors have invariably been the sources of new creative works in creative and cultural productions. According to Cascone (2000), failure' has become a prominent aesthetic in many of the arts in the late 20th century, reminding us that our control of technology is an illusion, and revealing digital tools to be only as perfect, precise, and efficient as the humans who build them" (2000, p. 393). Cascone, though writing on its manifestation in the audio culture, traces its lineage to the visual artists such as the Italian Futurist movement at the outset of the 20th century, John Cage, and even to the influences of industrial society which forced artists "to focus on the new and changing landscape of what was considered *background*" (p. 394), instead of the foreground. Alan Kirby succinctly captures the overriding influence of the new cultural regime that operates from the glitch art conceptual framework by dubbing it a "pseudo-modern" tendency through a well-articulated essay that strives to lay wreaths on postmodernism. His paper, titled the "Death of Postmodernism and Beyond", sets the context for our understanding of the aesthetic manifestation of glitch art as a materialization of the current cultural expressions and consumptions that legitimize glitch art as a signpost of an era. Referring to the contemporary time as pseudo-modern, he observes that, "in this context pseudo-modernism lashes fantastically sophisticated technology to the pursuit of medieval barbarism – as in the uploading of videos of beheadings onto the internet, or the use of mobile phones to film torture in prisons" (Kirby 2006).

Thus, glitch art is an emerging creative expression derived from malfunction or short-lived digital and computer faults on contemporary technological device monitors. Starting from the year 2000, a new demographic cohort entered the stage, reaching maturity and hitting the labour force twenty years later. The entrance, thus, contributes new narratives and tropes that define a hyperpop culture with redefinitions of gender, democracy, lifestyle, ethics and tradition. We use the term *hyperpop* in this study not as an exclusive concept of contemporary

music influenced by Electronic Dance Music (EDM) and traditional pop, but, in its generic sense that is expressed in visual art, theatre arts, fashion, general lifestyle, short videos as in Tiktok and skit. It typifies the era of *Do It Yourself* (DIY) which takes the erstwhile popculture's psychedelic, brash and artificial feel to intersect with contemporary electronic devices. We feel compelled to emphasize that the artists whose works are reviewed in this essay are not in any guise connected to the hallucinogenic effect of drugs; rather, the term is used here in its original Greek sense of “mind manifesting”. They are equally unaware of the connections between glitch art or its association of high tenor and brash colors that evoke hyperpop influences. But, as part of a macro-cultural system, the colors and other artistic elements have seeped into their creative expressions as a sign of authenticity of their experiences within time. Glitch art's connection to hyperpop in the present time resonates the way hip pop is at the core of graffiti arts as a micro-genre of the 1960s pop art. The younger generations are mostly implicated in this shift while the older generations maintain their traditional suspicion to accepting it into mainstream cultural value.

The appropriation of a technological error by a generational cohort for expressive purposes holds deep semiotic possibilities for understanding what is trending among a younger generation and its sociocultural dynamics. As semiotic study is an interdisciplinary field concerned with the act of making meaning from signs, it entails the investigation of sign systems and their functions in the various areas of human cultural and technological interests. Our semiotic approach here derives from a post-structural perspective where “meaning is something that is pre-configured by a whole set of socio-political and historical frameworks and contexts” (Jozwiak, 2013. p.12). Our chosen semiotic strategy conflates the gaps between sign, signifier and signified from Rowland Barthes and the Saussurean linguistic scope. We attempt to open these known approaches up to both the visual and textual as a route to connecting the key aspects of our investigation into the glitch art, Gen-Z, hyperpop influence and the Nigerian context. We consider the agency of the semiotic process in differentiating mere aesthetic expression from the salience of visual sign systems in communicating critical issues of a society. Through the above, we highlight the syntactic and semantic elements of description and use them to address the salient issues of presence, expression and connotation in the affect and conceptual registers. The study interrogates artworks under glitch art typology by analyzing their visual entities and compositional relationships as signifiers of contemporary realities of the youths in Nigeria.

The Meta fictive Narratives of “Glitch Art” Within the Context of the Gen-Z

The terms “Gen-X,” “Gen-Y,” and “Gen-Z” have gained currency in popular culture and scholarly discourses, but these terms are associated with age-related cohorts. They are also adopted for the elucidation of specific character traits associated with the groups. It will therefore suffice to shed some light on the background of the demographic cohorts behind the scenes of our topic. This is with a view to highlighting the technological glitch from the computer not only as a driving force behind contemporary aesthetic, social and political views, but also as an energizer of most young people's expressions and lifestyle. In discussing the appropriation of computer glitch in lifestyle and arts, the age bracket most implicated in the above trend is the Generation-Z (Gen-Z) demographic cohort. This is not a mere

happenstance; it is rather indexical in understanding foundational issues about the Gen-Z as distinct from others. Focusing on this group has symbolic implications for understanding the emergence of the trending expressive style that will surely attract serious interrogation by scholars in order to understand the Gen-Z mindset. As a throwback, the 'Gen-X' is a label attributed to people born during 1960s-70s, during the developmental stages of the computer; though sometimes cynical, this group has an increased understanding of technology. The 'Gen-Y' represents people born during the 1980s-90s known to have constant access to Information and Communication Technology gadgets and are sometimes called the Internet generation. Ultimately, the Gen-Z is the first to grow up with smartphones, such that the Internet and its enabling data are like the lifeblood which provides the basic need for living. Unlike the technologies that drove the industrial and post-industrial developments of the modern and postmodern eras, the contemporary world of the Gen-Z is tethered to addictive gadgets that tend to present ready-made solutions and obviate the patience for processes. For this latest generation, contemporary encounters are located more succinctly from the openings that postmodernism has enabled, leveraging on the Internet to build connections among people through its network of systems. Thus, the Internet has incentivized a patchwork of cultures to the extent that young citizens of the world mostly do not know any other reality outside the cut-and-paste from diverse sources. It is within this emergent cultural shift, played mostly by the Gen-Z group, that pseudo-modernism and hyperpop feed into the appropriation of glitch as a lifestyle.

The use of digital media for creativity has become a creative principle among this group and gives expression to new cultural forms that challenge the notions of arts, artists, audience, roles and responsibilities required from these categories. This serendipitous use of glitch from information devices by a demographic grouping whose modus operandi is basically different from that of the older demographic categories seems more domiciled within the social sciences. Both the technology and the cultural expressions it influences create a system of materiality for the artist to use in their expression of the time, just as Bertrand Russell once noted that “all great art is connected by its ability to give generation after generation a sense of who they are”. Since ICT is part of a sociotechnical system that Hecht and Edwards characterize as a “vast, interdependent networks of artifacts, institutions, people, and social systems” (2010, p. 274), it makes sense to say that the current cultural products emanating from the Gen-Z are made possible by the materiality and spectacle of the digital apparatus/ICT and its gadgetry. Notwithstanding the above, this investigation expands its use of the ICT materiality to creating iconography and semiotic relationship with the generational cohort in focus in order to open the study to an interdisciplinary interest within the creative arts. In a cognitive stance to the above, the expressions in fashion, lifestyle, music, performing and visual art all stem from the same influences. As Jennifer Clark, in her Graduate dissertation, notes:

Artists working in visual art, literature, and music have begun to incorporate digital technology into their creations. In each case, they have either appropriated existing technology or created new technology to suit their particular needs. The result has been new cultural forms that have called into

question the nature of the fields within which they are created, as well as the nature of the artists themselves and the roles and responsibilities of their audience. (Clark 2003, p. 7)

Though the current appropriation of glitch from computer for creative expression locates a certain fascination and aura which blur the author/audience divide, its history predates the 21st century. Many scholars ascribe glitch art and hyperpop to the audio culture of music notwithstanding the close relationship between music and painting as a visual art form. To this end, Vassar has highlighted how “its associated visual culture contributes to its allure” (2020), while Colette Pomerleau has traced the history of 'glitch art' as an aesthetic dimension to the “beginning of the 20th century through distorted forms in cubist paintings, abstract short films and pixel-like rug designs akin to 8-bit video game landscapes” (2019). Obviously, the psychedelic fascination of the 1960s tends to have found its way into the 21st Century with so much verve added to it through the mix of ICT gadgets and the result is that almost every young person with a device has a tool of expression. The proliferation of gadgets has tended to turn iPhone and android carriers into quasi-artists thereby obliterating the walls of who is/who is not an artist. However, the degree of intervention problematizes the role of arts and the artists about which Pomerleau (2019) has observed that, “on the one hand, there are the tactical and critical artists who use the technique to criticize popular culture, and on the other hand the technique now is very much alive and part of this same culture.

Cultural and systemic glitches run on human wetware in real time, so if preceding generations had created the environments for glitch to occur and a subsequent generation (born into the glitch era) sees its aesthetic possibility without its ethical implications, it only follows the law of unintended consequences. It is imperative to note that the movement which valorized voyeurism did not just happen. Again, we find Alan Kirby's insight useful when he observes that the current generation “can direct the course of national television programmes but does not know how to make him or herself something to eat – a characteristic fusion of the childish and the advanced, the powerful and the helpless” (2006). He x-rayed the contemporary influences using drift of our youths to actively participate in the Big Brother television series to understand the shift in cultural values. Being academics working and living around our university campuses, we are daily confronted with what Kirby has referred to as technologized cluelessness in the way the glitch way of life has redirected our youths' attention, ranging from social etiquette to personal issues of safety. With the exception of the few articulate and serious-minded youths who have leveraged the technology to upgrade what it means to live in the Global South by leading cutting-edge advancements globally, the majority have repurposed the function of the technology to opium. We are inundated with seeing new adults drive in busy streets, chatting on iPhones where youths walk while engaged on their phones. We teach students who block their ears with assorted kinds of wired and wireless earphones or who are clutching a Chihuahua puppy within a shared classroom space during an active learning session. Also, we have lecturers who have no business teaching the nation's future leaders as they have a deficit in every ramification of what it takes to mould a future generation. All these and more are the human wetware that informed the invocation of the glitch as a veritable reference point for the current generation to anchor their entertainment

and understanding of life. As frightening as Kirby's observation of a generation that is incapable of the "disbelief of Grand Narratives which Lyotard argued typified postmodernists", the unintended consequences have found its vents through colours, forms and lifestyle that derive from glitch and hyperpop expressions.

The experience of living in Nigeria and being suffused in the young people's choice of colours in their fashion expressions, lifestyle as well as their obsession with contemporary technological gadgets are enough to feel psychedelic. The Mexican gallerist, Ruth Fehilly, once wrote that "...things are supposed to come into being through art because they already exist," an observation that acknowledges the role of semiotics in revealing deeper issues of a society. The works on review therefore map and decode the experiences that are influenced by the time of the Gen-Z. Thus, irrespective of professional training in the arts or the lack of such training, cultural productions from the young generation is once again blurring the lines between what constitutes art in the manner of Andy Warhol and his contemporary pop art's transgressive role in high and low art. The difference in paradigms calls for the need to investigate the attitudinal dimension that derive creative source from system mistakes as a way of understanding the zeitgeist of the contemporary era. This also informs the essentiality in studying and accommodating changes among the different age cohorts as a way to understand current cultural manifestations of production, distribution and consumption. Coincidentally, it is this proclivity for deriving resource materials from mistakes of already existing technologies underlying the glitch art expression that will be used in this paper as a materialization of the underpinning principles behind changes in recent cultural productions and consumptions.

Aestheticization of Glitch as a Semiotic Narrative of an Era

Balaghi's exhibition (mentioned earlier) has conceptualized the glitch as a framework to deal with the themes of political upheavals, topological disruptions and perpetual fragmentations of lives in the Middle East and North Africa. Interestingly, not all the artists in Balaghi's exhibition fit into the glitch art template. Obviously, the above problematizes the scope of glitch art beyond a single frame or methodology. We also consider Anna Blumenkranz's graduate seminar at Goldsmith University with its critical interrogation of the characteristics of glitch art. Blumenkranz's paper addresses the real issue of determining the place of glitch as a building material for the glitch artist and pure glitch emanating as erratic system dysfunction. She questions the condition of planning an accident in order to create art and asks if we can "draw a clear line between a completely unforeseeable accident happening unexpectedly during an unrelated practice, and an accident directed and manipulated with certain techniques" (2012, p. 1). Her paper aided our further understanding of the tendencies arising from the different methodologies applied by artists associated to the subject of glitch as aesthetic principle. From this point, the bringing together of the different strands and multiple layers of complicated aesthetics and sociocultural issues was brought to the fore and simplified.

The anxiety concerning the subject, form, content, and sensibilities of a generation displayed through glitch art by Gen-Z may or may not inscribe the value of greatness to the trend, but the

fact still subsists for Bertrand Russell's assertion on its accordance to a generation 'a sense of who they are'. Let us take for instance a mixed-approach work by Princess Indrani Amulu Egharevba titled *Rani and Mars*, created in the heat of the Covid-19 lockdown in Boston, USA. This painting which shares iconographic features with many other glitch-styled paintings is not only a visual semiotic text of the age and time of the artist but is emblematic of most artistic expressions within this genre. *Rani and Mars*, though, affirms the modernistic penchant for formalism and synthesizes the postmodernist's ironic and self-referential excesses to arrive at a form that is specifically contemporary. The dominant figure in the painting, as hinted above, is influenced by modernity's formalism and combines this with a self-referential form with a narcissist proclivity for the contemporary era. Just as the mythological Narcissus is preoccupied with his self-image reflected in the pool of water, most young people today find this obsession through the screen-centered ICT gadgets and, instead of engaging the society, indulge in a “*trance* – the state of being swallowed up by your activity” (Kirby, 2006).

Evidently, there is no intentionality of creating glitch art through using technological devices to corrupt our memories of things we see by Princess Indrani egharevba, but the *glitchy* aesthetics created through pushing of the boundaries of her colors, form and overall design locates her work within the global glitch-art micro-genre. Unlike typical glitch art where forms are either intentionally distorted to fake computer pixilation or color leaks and noise, Princess Indrani's central form is complete but evokes a surreal image through its pose, gesture and colors. Notwithstanding the above, we are looking at the esoteric background, otherworldly form and her choice of colours. Though organic, these are influenced by the glitch aesthetics and indexical to understanding the internal dynamics and zeitgeist of the Gen-Z within the hyperpop exposures.

In her limited palette of reds, purples and accentuated blues broken by golden ornamentation, the viewer gleans an avatar image of the artist ensconced on her digital device in a milieu of abstract orchids. The image is pushed forward from the background through the noisy golden-horned helmet with equally accentuated earrings, bracelets, bangles, rings and ornamented nipples. But beyond this typical hyperpop maximal arrangement of objects is a bold third eye, arranged vertically, which completes a triangular arrangement with the two eyes interfacing with her digital device. Harmonizing the golden accoutrements of fashion that simultaneously accords the form its nostalgic and futuristic feature are eyes with a golden iris and a third one with a blue iris and a pupil in a face fixated on a mobile device. It is not certain if the fourth eye crested on the temple of the horned helmet is merely designed as complementary to the translucent blue locket on the necklace creating another triangle or adding to the symbolism of triangular designs which abound in the painting. The artist sees these eyes as a design element functioning as balance as well as hypnotically attracting the viewer's attention. In an email with one of the writers of this essay, the artist claims that the eyes in her painting are symbolic as they “ward off bad energy and represent a state of consciousness of past, present and future times”. This speaks volume of the 'all knowing, all seeing and ubiquitous' presence of the *Google* software which only aligns with our inert inquest in its bid to indulge us with the reflection of our own thoughts. The swirling of colors originates as blue and suddenly morphs into violet and purple, only to resonate in reds. This recaptures the random movement of glitch

imbued with electricity and vitality. This self-referential image of the artist had initially elicited a sense of alarm from the young artist's mother, not on issues of craft or dexterity but as it pertains to the banality of the nude figure. Such reaction is typical from the older generation who misunderstands what makes the Gen-Z different from others. Born after the turn of the millennium, Princess, like others within her cohort, had grown up to seeing, clicking, surfing, pushing and sifting images as second nature with a very diverse ethic and social framework that accommodate the glitch as a bond between our human and post-human nature.

The fluid combination of traditional and digital processes to create artwork that intersperses the technocultural horizon inhabited by the Gen-Z locates her work within the pervading psycho-dynamics of the above-mentioned cohort. A consciousness or lack of the awareness of the glitch-styled artworks or hyperpop influence by Princess only reinforces the authenticity of her work in its representation of self within its time frame. The overall aura of the painting conflates Kirby's later re-christened digimodernism from pseudo-modernism with Nicolas Bourriaud's, substitution of hypermodernism to altermodernism. It also factors 'Complexism'-Phillip Galanter, with 'Post-postmodernism' as emerging postmodern avatars arising from its inherent fragmentations. Typical of glitch art's hyperpop feature of playfulness and real or fake anarchy, *Rani and Mars* (Fig 1) synthesizes digital and analogue processes to create an anime character from the artist, using vibrant and colorful colors within a crowded organic and swirling purple, crimson and red. On top of this is the surreal atmosphere that simultaneously conflates the future and the past through using *anemoia* to create a typical science fiction (sci-fi) scenario in the painting. This accommodates the real nostalgia of the older generations who experienced glitches as mistakes during the early periods of the computer development and the newer generations to whom it has become a fascination to use mistakes to celebrate imperfection and consumerism. All these locate the zeitgeist of the young contemporary members of our society.



Fig. 1. Egharevba. P.I (2020). *Rani and Mars*. [Mixed Media/ Digital Painting]. Artist's Collection, Paris.

However, as glitches have been noted to occur randomly with a jolting effect on users or receivers of ICT device monitors, the influences have come to trail the post-internet reality of contemporary citizens most of whom are open to the computer-mediated reality. *Rani and Mars*, mentioned above, succinctly combines the chromatic intensity of computer glitch and the hyperpop sensibility of the youths to give a node to the glitch aesthetics. It therefore subsists to say that the glitch aesthetics, though valorizes the intermedial approach between the analogue and the digital, also interlaces the transcendental with the immanent. These features that have attracted the wide range of age cohorts, modes of expression, styles, and approaches are associated with glitch as expressive principle. In considering the work of Clement Akpang within this trope, we have factored in the fact, among other considerations, that, though he is a member of the Gen-Y cohort, he deploys *anemoia* in order to feel nostalgia for a time he did not fully experience, as is evident in the manner in which his work under review captures the glitch aesthetics. The glitch aesthetics in his work foregrounds and problematizes current issues of globalization through its intersections and entanglements with local manifestations. Interrogating his work within this subject is salient because as a scholar and an academically trained artist he is conscientiously methodical in his choice of theme, colour, and design arrangements which reflects the glitch framework. Unlike Indrani's hyperpop colours, Akpang is more direct in the manner he avoids direct visual representation of objective/figurative reality but rather opts for shapes, colours, distortion of forms, and reliance on spontaneity. Where the former is very formalistic as an aspect of glitch and hyperpop, the latter is extremely glitchy without any trace of objective reality. With his subjective arrangement and recontextualization of traditional artistic elements and motifs that lose their prepositional value, the poetics of glitch art takes the fore as immaterial chunks of data and defines the present through what it takes from the past. The variety in style gives insight into the spatial scope of glitch art and its influences as providing a semiotic foundation to understanding the phenomenon from its global ramification of pseudo-modernistic traits among our young generations. What compels us to direct our attention to Akpang's work exhibited in *Creolization* in glitch art and the hyperpop-related topic is the reconfiguration of a formalist materiality into the digital domain where error has become the crux for creative appropriation.

Akpang's adoption of the glitch-style aesthetics was shown to the public in a joint exhibition held in Calabar in August 2021 where his autodidactic proclivity to the glitch-sphere was evident in the pedagogical slant of works such as *Aesthetic Layers* (2020), *Meta-narratives I to III* (2020), and *Indigenous Modernity* (2016). Akpang has conceptualized the transitory essence of the contemporary time when he materialized a “space not bounded by territory, time or cultural restrictions” as captured in the “Concept Note” for the *Creolization* exhibition. Akpang's mixed approach painting is not about image destruction, pixelated forms or hallucinatory jagged lines; rather, its intrinsic repetition of traditional motifs alongside contemporary iconographies evokes the indefinite and jarring interruptions of glitch. In this sense, the interlacing of the familiar with the strange compares to “the distortion and diffusion that we have to navigate when we work our way through data” that Gaafar refers to when analyzing Sakr's work in her essay titled “Glitch: Art and Technology” (2020, p. 423). The sartorial splendor of reimagining traditional African motifs from its original domains to the contemporary milieu of hyper-pop where noise is romanticized in place of sound is evident.

The distortion and diffusion of motifs from different sources, time, space and cultures is reconfigured and presented by Clem as abstract metamorphosing and swirling forms. Ejagham and Ekoi pictographs blend with new colors and shapes to give meaning to visual noise as glitch. He goes on to print them on strips of rice paper which he sometimes assembles in columns or juxtaposes them to form a double layered pictorial surface. The printed strips actually consist of repeated, juxtaposed, superimposed, and toggled motifs that lose their individual features as they commingle with what was originally formalistic. Here, the transformation of analogue motifs from traditional societies into the digital space is analogous to the interconnections between the two processes with its tendency towards a post-human condition.

When these traditional motifs are adorned with abnormally high saturated colors and arranged in a way that obliterates any trace of figure-ground relationship, they create an uncanny depth that harbours a dramatic array of pixels and vectors. *Indigenous Modernity* (2016) references the agency of the machine within the environment of the human mind where the haptic, though explicitly coded, seeps into the mental to create elusive and yet allusive connections with meaning emerging from mechanical errors. Consisting of five stripes of 240cm x 78cm approximately, arranged in columns, each panel of the print turns familiar and unfamiliar motifs into a transformative and infinite experience that gives off the illusion of motion. Beyond the appropriation of the glitch poetics shown in *Indigenous Modernity*, tracing the form of the unforeseen social reality immanent in technological errors of yesteryears and their attraction for current cultural production is critical to understanding the present. What is more critical is the fact that the artist is neither a member of the Gen-Z cohort nor was he reacting to any of the issues raised above in the essay, but the semiotic signations of the work in context reveal key concerns of this study. Could this then allude to the unintended consequences between the interlacing of the past errors and exigent constructions to forge the present or is it part of the psychodynamic influences where time and space inform the artist's production? The above question takes us back to Russell's syllogism of great art and its features. All these become a productive framework for theorizing the shifting paradigms associated with different generational cohorts within the contemporary era.



Fig. 2. Akpang. C. E . (2020). *Meta-narratives III*, Ink on Canvas, 150cm by 120cm, Artist's collection, Calabar.

Aesthetic Layers, *Meta-narratives I to III*, and *Indigenous Modernity* fit into a series of a tripartite narrative in visual form and connect the related concepts of digimodernism, altermodernism and complexism within the context of Gen-Z with its iteration of the past. He had picked up fragments of the Gen-Z tendencies while navigating the society as a tech-savvy scholar, artist and traveller and this finds its outlets in his creative work. This is where his experience as a scholar merge with his experience as an artist to capture the influences of the time. Even though he belongs to a different demographic cohort from our main subject, his experiences of the moment afford his expressive and thematic choices their authenticity as a semiotic source for our study. It further presents the subject with the imbrication of the social function of art, notwithstanding its aesthetic value. Through its disruptive affect, the glitch-look-alike work of Akpang awakens a supposed somnolent and passive audience to start rethinking cultural issues and artifacts as playing agency to the current digital capitalism.



Fig. 3. Akpang.C.E. (2016). *Indigenous Modernity III*, Ink on Canvas, 240cm by 390cm, Artist's collection, Calabar.

Conclusion

The computer and its miniaturized gadgets have impacted on the increase availability of information and almost every aspect of our contemporary life. It is therefore, emblematic to derive inspirations from its functions and malfunctions as a way of locating the essence of computer-mediated Gen-Z era. In lieu of the above, this study is narrowed down to the interrogation of this phenomenon by studying selected works from two Nigerian artists as a way of understanding how the glitch reflects our time. This is due to the similarities in their scope which reveals all the stated interests of the study. Despite the age difference between the artists, the works covered, reveal the semiotic underpinnings behind the attraction of members of the younger generation towards their choice of expression as a sign of the era. If the glitch art and its associated coterie micro-genre expressions had remained voyeuristic or superficial, it would have commanded little attention from artists and scholars alike. The subject of glitch has been endearing to artists and scholars alike due to its potential as a veritable source for expressing the internal dynamics of a society at the crossroads of technology and a young generation's creative appropriation of its supposed errors to define self. Even though this creative force seems ephemeral, it will be recorded as one of the experiences of the contemporary citizenry.

Along with the current screen-suffused exposure of the young members, the technological glitch is interfacing with the socio-political glitches of the society to bring to the fore a new paradigm that feeds from society's fault lines. Having been traced to *anemoia* as a throwback on what was considered technological error by previous generations, the works presented reveal the parameters and features of the Gen-Z with apparent hyperpop influences. Thus, irrespective of whether the artists have or lack formal professional training in the arts, cultural productions from the young generation are once again blurring the lines of what constitutes art in the manner that Andy Warhol and his contemporaries facilitated the transgressive role of high and low art through pop art. The difference in paradigms necessitated the investigation of the attitudinal dimension that finds a creative source in mechanical malfunction as a way of understanding the zeitgeist of the contemporary era. This also informs the essentiality in studying and accommodating changes among the different generational cohorts as a way of understanding current cultural manifestations: production, distribution and consumption. Coincidentally, it is this proclivity for deriving resource materials from mistakes of the past underlying the glitch art expression that was used in this paper to materialize the underpinning principles behind current changes in cultural production and consumption.

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