

# **Golden Germs: Batuan Painting in Africa and Global Expressionisms**

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## **Abstract**

While one often thinks that creative art, that which is valued as original and new, is completely unique to a particular culture, time and place, it is as a rule not the case at all. All great and small artists, and cultures for that matter, have been inspired in some generative degree by those that came before or from afar, nourished by inspirational images, ideas and techniques, a continual process of adaptation, internalization and externalization. This is the true value of history, archaeology and anthropology for the study of art in the context of a scientific institution as I see it. I will illustrate this today by comparing instances of this principle in modern art in Indonesia and Zimbabwe and show how they are directly linked in the case of the Batuan and the Cyrene painters. These examples have larger consequences for revisiting the great past debates in the anthropology of art, specifically in terms of the much outdated polarities of diffusionism versus local genius.

## **Introduction**

Artists have always been inspired by previous arts and artists from diverse times and places. In fact, the greatest artists are typically those who have intensively studied diverse artistic traditions and worked upon that inspirational material consciously and unconsciously in new contexts and media to new ends. With careful analysis we can always discern the history of forms in time, the working of the inspirational golden germs and this is the basis of art history. Therein art historians have always been fascinated with how artists' works contain direct allusions which put them in often-times explicit conversation with the sources of their inspiration.

Take for instance Henry Moore's sketches of women and men in the London underground escaping the German bombing during World War Two and his subsequent large bronze sculptures, a form which became iconic of British modernism. This was the organic synthesis of his inspiration in the pre-Hispanic Mexican Chac Mool sculptures which he had studied intently in the British Museum and his life experiences and context as an artist in Britain at a particular moment in history (Braun 1989). Of-course, today Picasso's and the other modernists inspiration in the "primitive" arts are the best known instances of all (Rubin 1984), that is, after the previously exceptionally well known instance of J.M.W. Turner's inspiration by artists such as Claude as so succinctly and

accessibly recently expressed in *J.M.W Turner: The Man Who Set Painting on Fire* (2005). Indeed, the study of how Western artists have continually been inspired by the art of previous artists and from other cultures and times is the very basis of art history (Gombrich 1986, Ruskin 1873, Vasari 1965), that is, before the post-modern era (see Foster 1983, Preziosi 1989).<sup>i</sup>

With the rise of the anthropological study of art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, these methods became increasingly applied to non-Western contexts. Following in that larger tradition, in this paper, I take a somewhat scientific approach to studying art history. Why scientific one may ask? The answer lies in the fact that despite one's suspicions of connections between artists' works and potential sources of inspiration, the requirements of scholarship dictate that one cannot credibly hypothesize whether two disparate traditions are linked or not unless irrefutable evidence can be provided.

When one can find such evidence as presented below, golden germs as it were, one is very fortunate indeed. Thus though specific formal and structural elements, one could say stylistic lexicons and grammars, called my attention to fact that these similarities pointed to common origins, I could not prove that they did not constitute mere affinities. However, once evidence of the connection was found in the archival record, that is in two specimens in the National Archives of Zimbabwe, a clear copy of a Balinese Batuan painting (or is it an actual Batuan painting which had found its way there) it was possible to move from the domain of hypothetical inference to evidential reality.

In this, the rational requirements of science critically inform the anthropological study of art. Of course this is nothing new. Anthropologists have always carefully assessed data from the archaeological, historical and ethnographic record so as to reconstruct the past and better understand the present. The result of such studies in form, technique and content is continuously revealing more and more specific histories of relations, that is, not only of the nature of local creativity but of the history of foreign influences and their incorporation into local tradition. Indeed, through combing history so as to better understand art, we are thus able to show the passage and evolution of particular forms through time and to progressively re-evaluate, reject or confirm, and ultimately even refine hypotheses as to the nature of change, time and form itself.<sup>ii</sup>

In the African examples discussed below, and linked to and reflected upon through the benefit of the Indonesian instances, we find that there is clear proof of germinative foreign influences. This is historically and anthropologically important as such influences were systematically denied by the men who first presented these emergent traditions. They did so in order to establish the legitimacy of these arts as authentic, authenticity in their eyes meaning a local purity devoid of alien infection. Accordingly, a scientific approach to the study of art and culture is essential as it forces us to hold to the singular principle of truth value which has been arguably jettisoned in post-modern critical theory.

Regardless of the way in which post-colonial and post-modern theory has energized the discipline, as I see it, if we do not maintain the fundamental distinction between fact and fiction (regardless of competing models within science as to describing reality, and regardless of the political dimensions of contesting and inventing facts as so critically introduced in post-modernism), we cannot study change in art and society objectively. Simply put, without a rigorous scientific approach to contesting the veracity of sources so as to comb history against assertions made for history for implicit and

explicit political agendas, we cannot re-construct the life of forms in time, and cannot understand how forms, ideas and technologies travel and how they are used to constitute reality.

In concluding this introduction, it is important to re-iterate why anthropologists study art and society. They are impelled to ask the primordial questions which surface when both specialists and laypeople alike engage the arts of other societies and especially those arts emerging from inter-cultural encounters. First, depending on one's aesthetic sensibilities, one experiences a sense of wonder at the craftsmanship and the power and beauty of something finely executed. Second, one is compelled to ask questions about form and meaning. Third, because of the affinities that abound particularly in manifestly inter-cultural art forms, it is natural to seek out the evident historical connections. Lastly, fourthly, as critical intellectuals working in the post-modern era whether we like it or not, we have to reflect upon how we go about answering these questions, that is, how can we answer such questions without projecting our fantasies of the other or our misperceptions of history and society into our interpretation of the material record – as difficult as that may be.

### **Two Instances: Modernisms Connecting Art in Zimbabwe and Indonesia**

It is possible to document some highly unexpected and precise links in the history of forms in modern art in Asia and Africa, specifically in the case of Indonesia and Zimbabwe in the work of the Balinese Batuan and the Cyrene mission painters both in the colonial period. This connection has not yet been noted in the literature. The second instance refers to a different instance of relation and history of how traditions travel in time and are creatively adapted in new cultural and historical contexts in this case expressionism in the work of two artists from the later nationalist periods in Indonesia and Zimbabwe, namely Darmidja Satiman and Kingsley Sambo.

In the first case, I demonstrate that there is an indisputable link between Balinese Batuan painting of the late 1930's and the paintings from Cyrene mission in Southern Rhodesia in the late 1940's. In the second case, I explore a very different instance of inter-cultural fertilization of the arts, that of the influence of German Expressionism on the work of the Indonesian expressionist painter Darmadji Satiman in the 1950's and on the works of the Neo-African Expressionists in Rhodesia in the 1960's and 1970's, the nationalist period following twenty years later in the latter case.

### **The Influence of Balinese Batuan Paintings on the Children's Paintings at Cyrene Mission in Southern Rhodesia: The First Golden Germ**

In this section, I lay out something of the history of Cyrene mission so that this audience can get a sense of the context in which Balinese Batuan painting had a distinct influence though this has never been noted before. It will no doubt be met with incredulity by most Zimbabweanists. Indeed, if it were not for the evidence of the golden germs I would not be in a position to advance this relation. As I do not have the time to develop this argument in this text, I will simply be using the presentation itself as a context for describing the formal similarities which constitute the affinities and which

originally raised my suspicion that this might be the case. As mentioned above, two paintings in the National Archives of Zimbabwe, prove this connection beyond any doubt as shown in the presentation, the first actually being a Balinese Batuan painting and the second a black and white sketch of a mosque with the title "In the Land of the Pagodas". In subsequent developments of this paper I will explore the formal and technical as well as narrative and inter-cultural communicative relations in greater depth. For now, let me simply lay out something of the history of Cyrene painting and explore something of threads of traditions which run through the complex historical and social aspects of this little known art history.

The first modern painting by Africans in Zimbabwe came about as the result of a mission school project in which Canon Edward Paterson put into practice the methods and goals of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. We have important insights into the many other influences effecting these artists works through their teacher, Canon Paterson as related below. For instance, as A.C. Walker has related in the biography *Paterson of Cyrene* (1985 Paterson had developed a special affinity for Chinese Tang period landscapes while training in London and he transmitted these and other influences ranging from Matisse to Gill and Romanesque art onto the young artists such that these "Persian" legacies are clearly discernible in the paintings and sculptures of the early modern Zimbabwean artists.

It is important first to stress the context in which Paterson was working. He believed that the stress on academic education for Africans in Southern Africa was alienating people from their village life and proposed that an education stressing craftsmanship could best ameliorate the problems created for villagers by industrialization and centralization. In a Ruskinian fervor for the propagation of the Gospel and economic self-empowerment through the arts and crafts, he envisioned Cyrene students as becoming "self-contained burger types[s]." He hoped that they would become "Christian gentlemen and strong points of light in this heathen darkness" and that they would propagate these values through taking their skills and faith back to their villages (1940:4,5) and to some degrees these paintings communicate this.

In the Cyrene Papers Canon Paterson describes the circumstances which led up to the first of these exhibitions. There he provides telling and interesting details about inter-racial contact at these events. His surviving accounts are indeed telling of the dominant pattern of racial intolerance in Rhodesian race relations at the time. As Paterson recorded, the European school children did not believe that the work on display could have been made by African students. They had to be able to see the students in action to believe it had been made by them.

I had sensed, from the general European attitude towards natives, that few people would believe that the pictures were painted by the boys themselves and from their own imagination, so to guard against this we took to the exhibition six students to work at pictures, starting with blank sheets of Whitman paper. All through the Exhibition these boys were surrounded by a crowd of onlookers. The reactions of European children to these artists was amusing because they started arguments with the boys and just would not believe that the pictures they were doing were their own work (1947:2).

Paterson next wrote that eventually, after painting over eighty works for European students who were by now asking for them, "all sense of racial difference disappeared" (ibid.). This function of art to act as a sympathetic bridge for inter-racial interaction continued to animate the patronage of the art which would emerge over the coming decades and this inter-racial inter-cultural liberal agenda pervades all these art worlds (Becker 1989). Naturally, this is also the case with Balinese Batuan painting which is very much an inter-cultural art form resulting from the same impulses though in the Balinese case the artists were also adults. In addition, the critical difference between the Balinese and the Cyrene work in general is that it is more aesthetically sophisticated in terms of complexity and execution and culturally it is far more deeply informed in that the paintings convey a great deal more indigenous narrative content (Geertz 1994, Spanjaard 2007).

The basic philosophy at work in Cyrene to a greater degree than in the Batuan case is that these young artists were merely guided and encouraged to find their own unique forms of expression -- to "give expression to mental images founded upon their observations" and to let them teach themselves. Walker describes how this was derived from the pedagogical devices developed by Austrian educator Frederick Froebel (see Liebschner 1992). Froebel's important discovery was to use children's natural creative expression as part of their self-development. In successfully applying this strategy, Cyrene art achieved an unprecedented success for contemporary African art as lauded by the British art critic Anton Ehrenzweig (1947). Herein, in describing art education at Cyrene mission in 1949, Paterson provided a simple manifesto of sorts. Accordingly, he wrote the following about "the study and practice of art and especially what is known as African Art:"

Every student draws and paints though some are timid at it. There are no pictures on the class-room walls and only a negligible proportion of the students have ever seen a picture book. We leave them alone to spin as best they may from within themselves a web of their own imagining . . . . Our students work entirely from the imagination. They depict the Rhodesian scene and people it with warriors and hunters or their own conception of the Gospel . . . (1949:4).

Describing his teaching philosophy he wrote: "We use the word 'teaching' but the method might be more properly called 'The Encouragement of Art' (Paterson 1949:11).

Terence Ranger, the emeritus Rhodes Chair of Race Relations at Oxford, has written glowingly of the Cyrene students' watercolor paintings, particularly the biblical scenes set in the Matopos. He held them up against the great watercolorists of their times, Baines and Oates. Ranger added upon this by quoting Paterson's belief in these young artists use of aesthetic success and of their sensitivity in depicting nature:

All of them [the watercolor landscapes] were more self-assured renderings of the hills than Baines and Oates had been able to attempt, and some of them represented a remarkable appropriation of the water color technique. John Balopi wrote Paterson, "is evidently conscious of deep rhythms in

nature and paints his pictures of great rocks, tortured rivers and gnarled trees rapidly and with great confidence." (1999:56).

Though the first black Zimbabwean artists began here by painting landscapes, they are not landscapes in the sense of a Baines' landscape with the emphasis on depicting an observed reality. Instead, they are imaginative renditions as Paterson hoped they would be. In the main, these early painting were biblically inclined because of the children's' experience with Christianity at Cyrene mission (see Lehmann 1969) and in this they are starkly different from the Balinese case in which local mythology and religious practices embedded in daily life provided the cultural content which made the works in fact so interesting to the buyers then as today. In any event, at Cyrene, to some degree, in addition to biblical themes, they also focused on everyday subjects but what they did not do yet was to explore African mythology outside of the occasional reference to history in terms of tribal warfare and of-course renditions of village life as in the Batuan paintings.

In 1957, with government sponsorship, Paterson moved to Salisbury (Harare) the same year that the Rhodes National Gallery was opened. His most accomplished teachers went with him to Chirodzo, a government school for children between ages nine and thirteen. These Chirodzo paintings, which will not be considered here, were different from the children's' art which had emerged at Cyrene in that they were more colorful and dynamic, contained no biblical imagery and reflected the children's' urban rather than rural backgrounds, and in particular – the violence of the nationalist era. In any event, by 1961, Canon Paterson and his assistant teachers from Cyrene, were instructing over two thousand art students a day, most of whom were painting water colors. It was in that context that one of the teachers, Kingsley Sambo, perhaps the most successful of all Cyrene students, began exhibiting his mature work at the Rhodes National Gallery. Again, in the presentation itself I will discuss Sambo's evolution and compare some of the stylistic specifics of the Zimbabwean and Indonesian works under comparison.

### **Global Expressionisms: Kingsley Sambo and Darmadji Satiman The Second Golden Germ**

Indonesia and Zimbabwe, share many instances in which artists have been inspired by European modernism, especially expressionism, this being the case the world over (see Frank 2004, Harney 2004). Here I will briefly explore the iconic cases of Kingsley Sambo and Darmadji Satiman in order to illustrate the importance of such inspiration in the nationalist eras despite claims to the contrary in the case of Cyrene art as well as in subsequent experiments in which some of Paterson's students figured prominently, the case of Kingsley Sambo being one such instance. First, it is necessary to point out that it was the first director of the Rhodes National Gallery (now the National Gallery of Zimbabwe), Frank McEwen, who was the intellectual architect of the idea that the modern African artists such as Sambo had never seen modern art or any other art for that matter, in short that there were no golden germs involved. He maintained that the manifest similarities between the work of an artist such as Kingsley Sambo and that of the Expressionists was merely a matter of affinity. Relying on a mystical version of independent invention, he coined the term Neo-African German Expressionism which

very aptly described Kingsely Sambo's oil paintings in the early 1960's, as well as those of his counterparts such as Joseph Ndandarika and Thomas Mukarobgwa.

As the following account will lay out, the ensuing account is an extraordinary story of how the facts of history have been denied in the construction of what is for some the requisite primitiveness or alterity required for third world authenticity in the arts (see Hillier 1991, Zilberg 2001, 2002). Though McEwen argued that the artists had never seen modern art nor knew anything about it, in the inaugural catalog for the opening of the National Gallery in 1957, he defined expressionism as such:

A type of painting, sculpture or graphic art (also literature, cinema and dance) in which the artist tries through suggestive distortion of form, colour, space and other naturalistic qualities to destroy the external reality of a given situation and get at its "truth" or emotional essence. It is not descriptive or visual but analytical and internal, intended to penetrate the form or object so that the artist can lose himself in it and thus identify himself with something greater or more powerful" (1957 n. p.).

Again, it is important to stress again that though he provided such an erudite description in the catalog and though many examples of modern European art were on display, and that he even lectured the artists on these works, he vehemently denied for the rest of his life that the artists had ever seen these works, that they knew anything about modern art nor had received any prior training.

Here is McEwen's account of how such forms emerged:

Firstly I gave painting material to my African gallery attendants. The results were astonishing. An Afro-German expressionism was born – a reverse process at which we do not cease to wonder but for which there are no obvious explanations (Frank McEwen 1968, n. p.).

Naturally other people involved in the arts in Zimbabwe have called this into question. For instance, Derek Huggins, the Director of Gallery Delta in Harare has recently written this:

Yet influences occur and traces are left to intrigue and to become history. Even when history is deliberately rewritten to erase and eradicate one or the other culture, it is the arts that are indelible and provide the beacons that mark the way from the past to the present. (Derek Huggins 2001:29).

In fact, the explicit purpose of this paper, and my work at large, has been to identify these traces or beacons so as to reconstruct a history which runs directly counter to Frank McEwen's explanations, just as to some degree I was forced to do by Canon Paterson's denial of the influence of foreign forms on his students work at Cyrene. In all this, it is important to state the obvious again here that Kingsley Sambo was indeed a trained artist prior to his work at the Rhodes National Gallery as has been given in the first section of this paper on the history of Cyrene mission and in terms of the connection to Batuan painting as discussed in terms of the visual details in the presentation accompanying this

paper.

Sambo (1944-1977) was an amazing modern artist. He has two oil paintings in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. They are titled *After the Rain* and *Balancing Rocks* and both were painted in 1962. As these paintings reveal, though others in his corpus do so even more, he was inspired by Vincent Van Gogh in more ways than one. Moreover, his life was also prematurely put to an end with a gun – though not his own.<sup>iii</sup> In any event, Sambo was clearly inspired by Van Gogh's expressionistic technique, his use of bright primary colors, his obsessive interest in nature and motion in nature and especially by his frequent use of himself as a model. The main difference between Van Gogh and Sambo was that one suffered and the other did not – at least that was, until the end for Sambo did not survive the war of independence. He was murdered near his farm in Dewa, close to Rusape, in 1977.

In Sambo's self-portrait reproduced in the catalog *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968), produced by the International Council for the Museum of Modern Art, an African dandy stares out at us from the land of the dead. Indeed, Sambo's power of achieving verisimilitude is evident in the photograph of McEwen and the painters in the Workshop School. The artist can be seen on the far right hand side at the back of the group. Self-assured, he looks over the scene in which his work is the focus of attention and clearly McEwen's pride and joy. The painting is typical of Sambo's joyous expressive depictions of dance and as McCloughlin (1997) describes - the considerable sense of cultural freedom that prevailed in the early 1960's in Southern Rhodesia - before the darkening of the political and social landscape and the onset of the war which raged through the 1970's culminating in independence in 1980.

Kingsley Sambo had once been a successful cosmopolitan who in better days, in the 1950s, used to drive an Austin Healey dressed in the flashiest suits and ties money could buy. Later in the 1960s he painted lively expressionistic paintings while under the influence of *mbanje* (marijuana) and alcohol as the painting *Smoker's Vision* in the catalog *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968) clearly alludes to. The colorful highly expressionistic study uses pinks, greens and purples and thick expressionistic impasto daubing to evoke a wonderfully dense sense of sensory distortion. Sambo's *Smoker's Vision* was acquired by Armand G. Erpf an important figure in the French art world.

In fact, it is little wonder then that Kingsley Sambo is best known of as "Cyrene's Rebel" (see Morton 2003). As a child, he had shown a talent for drawing. Naturally, he was sent to Cyrene Mission to study art with Canon Paterson (1895-1974) where Paterson predicted that Sambo would become a cartoonist because of his wit and facility (Hava 1984). In time he became a wealthy free spending urbanite, a cartoonist working for the *African Daily News* in Salisbury, now Harare, though Paterson ultimately had to replace him because of his growing interest in painting women in the nude. Sambo was ultimately as ill fated as Van Gogh, that is in his early death. However, in stark contrast to Van Gogh's miserable life, Sambo lived life to the fullest.

In 1962 when the Rhodesian Government banned the *African Daily News*, Sambo was suddenly out of a job. He did the natural thing, being from the Rusape area and being a Paterson student, and joined the group of artists working at the Rhodes National Gallery which had opened five years earlier on July 16, 1957. All the evidence point to the fact that Sambo was inspired by Frank McEwen's lectures, by the several stunning exhibitions of modern art held at the National Gallery in the early years and especially by

the books to be found in the gallery's library and elsewhere. He bought books on art, completed a course in art through correspondence and frequently visited Helen Leiros, the Zimbabwean painter and art teacher where he spoke with her about modern art and studied her many books (see Hava 1984). Drawing in a masterful way upon these resources, Sambo immediately established himself as one of the premier painters alongside Charles Fernando, Thomas Mukarobgwa (1924-1999) and Joseph Ndandarika (1944-1990) – all of whom came from the Rusape area.

Ultimately, when one thinks of the history of modern art in Zimbabwe then, one should always keep in mind that the young members of the Workshop School at the Rhodes National Gallery in the late 1950's and early 1960's had been exposed to modern art to a degree which is difficult to comprehend without an informed perspective on the extent and quality of the shows held at the Rhodes National Gallery in the early years. Whether it was Moore or Rodin, Matisse or Picasso, German Expressionism or Fauvism, Cubism or Pointillism - they had seen it all.<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, while artists such as Kingsley Sambo embraced art and the city for the creative doors which were flung wide open for them. They were non-practicing Catholics devoted to jazz, young men who loved the city life and the sinful modern pleasures and freedom it offered.

### **Searching for Sambo**

Sambo's expressionism had been something of a mystery to me for many years because so little had been written on him. Indeed, I suspected the source of his inspiration but could not confirm it. And while in the field in Zimbabwe from June 1990 until April 1992, I had gone on a wild goose chase and came up with very little. However as it turns out a great deal of information on Sambo was available in the mid 1980s in that his remaining works and books were right there all along at his parents' home near Rusape and there had even been a remarkable retrospective of his work at the National Gallery in 1984 (again, see Hava 1984). At that time however, I did not know this.

First I went to Rusape as I had heard that Sambo had painted a mural in the courtyard of the Balfour Hotel, the former owners having been his patrons and the hotel bar having been his favorite haunt (see Huggins 2001:20). But to my horror, when I got there I found that the new owners had long since painted over the mural with whitewash in their zeal to "improve" the condition of the courtyard and the garden. So I just sat there deflated in the hotel courtyard in the winter sun, and sharing my Castle Lagers with Sambo's ghost got a little drunk. But the goose chase was not yet over.

Over a year later during fieldwork, I was visiting with an artist in Harare and marveling at his newly painted triptych drying on the clothes line. The painted sheets were billowing gently in the summer breeze as the sun streamed through the lovely intensity of the expressive freedom of splashes of glowing primary colors. The effect was a visual spectacle, something akin to the transformative aesthetic experience of visiting Chagal's windows in Jerusalem on a sunny day - but in motion and abstract, somehow even more innocent and wholly free. Later that warm but breezy summer's day, the artist, the late Maarten van der Spuy, told me an amazing if tragic story.

When he had first moved to the country in the late 1970's it had been very hard to find canvas, especially stretched and mounted - and they were very expensive. One day someone drove up his driveway and offered him a large trove of mounted canvases. Not

having a clue of what they were, not knowing then who Kingsley Sambo was or what his paintings looked like, he bought them for a song and happily painted over them. Today, beneath the loveliest African wildflower still-lives you can imagine, Sambo's spirit survives. Wild flowers! And please do keep in mind, that when the subject of painting wild flowers comes up, art critics and art historians usually smirk and head for the door.<sup>v</sup> Anyway, the wild goose chase was not yet over as I relate further below. But first, back to New York.

In 1968, in official MoMA correspondence,<sup>vi</sup> Betsy Jones wrote the following to the publicist Judy von Daler about the press release for the upcoming traveling show organized by the Museum's International Council:

I think it is misleading to say that the artists have never seen any of the Western art. Frank lists in his *New African Art from Rhodesia* catalog a series of shows beginning in 1957 which included old masters from the Louvre, Tate etc., "modern masters," shows of Picasso and expressionists who demonstrate the influence of African art. Even though some of the artists in our traveling show may not have seen these shows they have probably had access to catalogs of them, to books on Western art or simply to reproductions in magazines. They may not have seen actual works, but the implication that the statement that they have never seen Western art is that they could not possibly have been influenced by it. I think it is possible; even probable.

Thus as Derrick Huggins writes then:

[E]ven when history is deliberately rewritten to erase and eradicate one or the other culture, it is the arts that are indelible and provide the beacons that mark the way from the past to the present (2001:29).

Let us go back to my wild Zimbabwean goose chase. Recently, I discovered a Sambo in the last place I suspected. To my great surprise, the goose chase finally ended in my father's house in Fort Worth, Texas, presciently enough for today's presentation in that Fort Worth is Bandung's American sister city. Anyway, as it turns out unbeknownst to me, Kingsley Sambo had been my late mother's favorite African artist. On seeing the signature and realizing it was a Sambo, and taking the painting down and turning it around, my father and I found a poem in Sambo's own suspiciously Gauguin-like flowing hand which reads:

Here I sat  
I beheld with wonder  
What time had done  
This Marshy-Land:  
The Landscape –  
Of my childhood

Wild Flowers

This tradition of penning a poem for paintings has a long history and it was none other than J. M. W. Turner who was perhaps most famous for this attempted cohabitation of the sister arts. Fortunately, Sambo was a far superior poet to Turner. Moreover, as I will show in more detail below, Sambo's sources and emulations were often explicit. In fact, he seems to have repeatedly made allusions to his inspirational engagement with modern art history explicit in his work assumedly to leave the trace and make it known that he was a modern artist working within that larger tradition – a beacon linking beacons. In fact, it seems possible to prove the direct link to German Expressionism through this painting as I attempt to do below.

One Van Gogh painting is of particular interest for the purpose of establishing a particularly potent link between Van Gogh and Sambo. In this we find that Sambo's *Wild Flowers* turns out to be directly inspired by one particular painting by Van Gogh - his most famous paintings – *Field with Poppies (Champ de ble, les coquelicots)* painted in June 1888. If one closely studies this historically enormously significant painting (acquired by the Kunsthalle Bremen in 1911, see Cantz 2002:83), it is especially interesting here, beyond the obvious influence to observe how Sambo has carefully controlled and extended the use of white strokes and the identical treatment of the pansies. Clearly Sambo was inspired by this painting and masterfully made one small section of the painting his own.

This is fascinating formally as this was the only painting of Van Gogh's which did not constitute a focused and unified whole as he related in a letter to his brother Theo (ibid:82). What Sambo has done here however is to do just that – to create a unified whole through focusing on this one field. His faithfulness to the original explains why the composition flows sharply to the left virtually extending itself outward of the bounds of the frame energetically speaking, exactly as in the original. It is touching for me how delicately and with what sophistication he has managed to make it African through the minor figures of two women fetching water in the center of the painting, just to the left.

The reason why this painting and the original is so interesting does not end there. There are several. *Field with Poppies* was the first painting Van Gogh painted after leaving the hospital in Saint-Remy. In fact, it was painted just outside the walls of the hospital such that Hatje Cantz was able to study the lay of the land and analyze how Van Gogh had modified the landscape to achieve particular ends. But far more important than this, after the painting was acquired by Gustav Pauli for the Bremen Kunsthalle it became the focus of a furious national debate over “the doctrine of the unities” and the charge of favoring foreign art, a debate which had begun earlier in 1905 (see Nierhoff 2002:148).

The subsequent controversy over whether French artists, especially Van Gogh, were perverting German artists rendered Van Gogh the most controversial painter of the time and had a major impact on the early twentieth century history of modern German art as related in scintillating detail in Cantz's book *Van Gogh: Fields* (2002). As it turns out, German Expressionism was a French infection sparked by the viral effect of the exhibition of Van Gogh's works at the Kunsthalle in 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1911 and this painting *Field with Poppies*, partly because of its astronomical price, was at the center of the scandal. Worse still, several of the French artists exhibited in Germany shortly thereafter were known as the Fauves (the “wild beasts”) who believed in color as the primary vehicle for the expression of internal subjective states.

The term Expressionism was coined in Germany in April 1911 when Manguin, Marquet, Derain Puy, Braque, Firesz, von Dongon, Vlaminck and Picasso were exhibited at the XXII exhibition of the Berlin Sezession as the “Expressionists” (Vergo in Gowing 2004:834). It was first explicitly defined the next year by Richard Reiche at the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne. Reiche understood Expressionism as a technique of simplification and enhancement of expression through rhythm and color (ibid:835). The style only became fully German during the First World War and today, of-course, Expressionism is understood to be specifically German, thus the term German Expressionism. After the war, Hermann Bahr in *Expressionismus* (1916) “Germanized” it further by claiming Goethe as the aesthetic source in that it was understood to be driven by the inner world of the emotions rather than the senses.<sup>vii</sup>

By the early 1920’s the remaining Expressionists had transformed themselves into Objectivists after which the Bauhaus movement, with Kandinsky at its head, took Germany off in a new direction before modernism and abstract art met its death at the hands’ of Adolf Hitler.<sup>viii</sup> Thus, when suddenly in 1962, a new form of Expressionism, Afro-German Expressionism appeared in the unlikely context of Southern Rhodesia, and by artists said to have no training in art and no exposure to modern art, the claim was met with some suspicion as noted in the MoMA records given above.

Now for the case of Darmadji Satiman, though only very briefly in this paper. The presentation provides a detailed visual comparison of their expressionistic techniques which are so remarkably similar in particular works by Satiman, Sambo and Van Gogh. Indeed, Satiman is particularly interesting as an artist who emerged from the nationalist era largely because of the important role his father played as a nationalist figure (see Couteau 1998). Though I do not have the time here to explore the cultural, political and historical dimensions which distinguish them as well as join them, I am simply interested in the context of this paper of demonstrating how very similar Sambo’s and Satiman’s techniques are. The point of this of-course is simply to show how much they owe to Van Gogh specifically and to Expressionism in particular and thus to close this paper by reiterating the central issue that I began with and have repeatedly returned to - that of Bosch’s “golden germ.”

### **Lessons for Historical Legacies**

Influences are essential to the creative process as T.S. Elliot understood it in his article “Tradition and the Individual Talent” in *The Sacred Wood* (1920). In fact, without Japanese Prints Monet would not have become Monet, without pre-Colombian sculpture Moore could not have become Moore (Braun 1989) and without the archaeological and ethnographic specimens in the Musee de l’Homme, Picasso could not have become Picasso (Rubin 1985, Clifford 1988). In this, McEwen was somehow completely misguided by his commitment to the ideology of historical purity. Yet despite this, the fact of the matter is that Frank McEwen was, after Paterson, the pioneer and patron saint of modern art in Zimbabwe and in terms of modern African art history it is McEwen who counts and Paterson who has been effectively ignored.

Nevertheless, McEwen’s attempt to sweep Western influence under the carpet and indigenize modern Rhodesian African art was eerily consonant with Julius Meier-Graefe’s notions of purity in *Der Fall Bocklin und die Lehre von den Einheiten* [*The*

*Bocklin Case and the Doctrine of the Unities*] (1905, see Nierhoff 2002:148). This earlier attempt in Germany to unify and purify German art, to efface foreign influence and nationalize creativity and art history was recapitulated in McEwen's purification of Rhodesian Afro-German Expressionism by denying the fact that it was a such fascinating phenomenon precisely because it was an Africanized expression of a venerable European tradition. The point of raising such a volatile point is that in the context of both Indonesia and Zimbabwe, culture and history is a deeply plural phenomenon and we cannot understand the nexus of art, religion and politics without taking full cognizance of the enriching function of the historical diversities inherent in the plural nature of the paintings examined in this presentation.

Let us return to Africa again. Indeed, it was during the inaugural show of the Rhodes National Gallery that Kingsley Sambo first came face to face with Van Gogh's self-portrait lent by the Rijksmuseum. McEwen himself paid homage to that inspirational moment with this tribute to Van Gogh in the inaugural catalog. As he wrote:

To continue the march of art up to the present day, we must return to the 1850's. At the time of the death of Turner in those hotbeds of experimental ideas, such as Paris, new schools, like waves of original thought, followed in quick succession. Each wave broke with a scandal only to be classified later as a new aspect of universal truth. Thus that poor and abandoned outcast, van Gogh, continues to inspire the pilgrimage of millions to his hallucinating works.

Out of those millions, it was not only Sambo who has remade Van Gogh in his own joyous image for young children all over the world are inspired in art classes to create their own magical versions of Sunflowers and Starry Night. In Indonesia, Satiman was clearly inspired by such expressionism and thus we see how traditions are continually invented by creative artists drawing on inspirational forms and techniques.

### **Towards Concluding**

The presentation rather than the paper has proceeded through a sustained discussion of particular specimens in order to prove the relations of connections in the first instance in the colonial era between Bali and Zimbabwe and in the second instance between global Expressionism in which artists in the nationalist eras drew inspiration from European Expressionism. It has sought to demonstrate the veracity of these cases beyond a reasonable doubt as if in a court of law, or as if upon a lab bench in which a biologist dissects one specimen after another in order to compare their morphology and evolutionary biology. Fortunately, against conventional wisdom as sanctified by academic recapitulation of myth as history, it has been possible to substantiate that in all of these instances these are causal relations. These are clearly not mere relations of affinity in independent invention. Making a definitive case for this has only been possible through the great luck of having been able to locate specific agents of the transmission of form, that is, the inspirational golden germs.

Naturally there are always political conflicts behind such competing claims but that aside, the point of this paper is that a scientific approach to a combined art history

and anthropology of art, allows us to set such records straight. This is an all important point when considers why in the African case, both the Balinese and the Expressionist influences have sometimes been systematically denied. In a more humanistic discussion, the issue that we would be discussing is why. We would be talking about authenticity and how certain modern art forms, especially in the developing world have been framed in a primitivist discourse in which non-Western and avant-garde Western artists are construed as having entirely different relations to history, nature and religion. However, having the great fortune of addressing the issue and this data in an institute of technology, we have been able to safely remove the post-modernist protective goggles from the lab bench and get out the microscopes and the scalpels.

This scientific emphasis on isolating facts in history is important on three counts. First, as mentioned above, it is important because it runs directly counter to the emphatic written disclaimers given by the men who first represented these traditions and whose words have been taken for granted to one degree or another in the extant academic literature with merely occasional expressions of doubt. Second, because in the post-modern era such an emphasis on fact versus fiction, especially contrary to accepted politically correct tradition, is anathema to the spirit that culture and history are invented and emergent constructs. Third, the essential problem here is that this data calls into question the authority and cultural politics of authorial voices who have championed independent African creativity, that is, the veracity of their claims to historical truth. The problem here is because such an analysis distinguishes between spurious and genuine authenticities as originally advanced by Edward Sapir (1924), a notion that is as out of favor as the very notion of diffusionism. Nevertheless, Sapir's outdated distinction clearly has a life of its own not only in the popular imagination but in the invention and promotion of new forms of modern art (Anthes 2006, Harney 2004, Myers 2002, Zilberg 2002, 2007a and b).

Beyond issues of authenticity, the debate over diffusion of form and content has become so thoroughly out of date as to have been largely rejected in the anthropology of art. Yet if one examines the study of Indonesian textiles over the last two decades a sophisticated and qualified notion of diffusion is very much alive. This allows us to return to the original formulations by anthropologists such as Heine-Geldern and Bosch which were never so crude as to argue for wholesale replacement of local forms by dominant foreign forms and associated ideologies and power structures. Though the most far fetched and racist imperialist manifestations have naturally been totally discredited, in my view the post-colonial pendulum has unfortunately forced many current students, particularly in Indonesia but just as much so in America and Europe, to have thrown out both the lower and upper fractions of the contents in our academic test-tube, or less scientifically - the proverbial baby with the bathwater. In essence then, now that the discipline of anthropology has had the requisite time and distance to assess the significance of the consequences of the wholesale rejection of diffusionism and the consequences for the history of truth as opposed to truths in the post-modern turn, it is indeed an interesting time to be able to revisit the great debates on style, culture and civilization.

Though the careful scientifically oriented analysis of regional artistic traits and complexes in the archaeological and ethnographic record is very much a thing of the past, it occurs to me that it is time to return to the seminal works by the larger than life figures

in the discipline such as Heine-Geldern, Bosch amongst others for Southeast Asia and Kroeber, Lowie and Boas amongst others for the Americas. It would certainly be an interesting and productive exercise in light of the tremendous depth of ethnographic, archaeological, historical and linguistic information that has been collected in the interim. It will allow us to return to the contrary notions of diffusionism, specifically the notion of the golden germ versus local genius now that we have the requisite conceptual distance from the informing pendulums of the colonial and nationalist eras so as to reassess in a more rigorous and extensive scientific fashion the richness of the fabric of history and the instances of transfer which have energized the arts of this greater region.<sup>ix</sup> It is surely a truism that the inspirational incorporation of and modeling upon foreign or prior elements and mythologies etc is the central dynamo for creativity. Without an adequate understanding of this process we have no art history and without the process we essentially would have no art.

### **Conclusion**

In order to bring the faded debates in terms of the old notions of diffusion versus local genius I hope to return young scholars at ITB to the likes of Heine-Geldern and Bosch, Kroeber and Lowie, Boaz and Benedict, and especially to the not so late Clifford Geertz and to our aging elders Hildred Geertz and Edward Bruner, anthropologists which have inspired my own work in Indonesia on art and society. Just as artists are deeply informed by previous artists, so is the case for scholarship in all disciplines. In the post-modern era of post-colonial studies, anthropology has to some important extent lost its traditional moorings and I believe that future students need to return to the ancestral fold. Unfortunately time does not permit further comment on this and I must rely on simply making this point as briefly as possible in closing as of-course intimated in the title and defer the subject to a future context.

If one did not soundly reject the post-modern evacuation of the modernist requirements for distinguishing fact from fiction, we could not demonstrate such histories of inspiration, emulation and incorporation. Nevertheless, to honor the constant creative process at work in academia, post-modernism has renewed the spirit of creativity in itself having impelled us to ask new questions in new ways, and especially for injecting creative possibilities into the research process and probing the political nature of competing discourses over the “facts” of history or the nature of authenticity. For the moment, in the pursuit of academic rigor over the passing frisson of intellectual fashion, I have simply introduced two comparative instances of highly unusual African-Indonesian interconnections in modern art. These allow us to look back upon the longstanding debate over diffusionism versus local genius. In Geertz’s terms, this allows us to “reflect light” back onto the contrastive notions of influence versus affinity which mirror these unproductive polarities. Doing so allows us to bring these related terms into relation in order to best understand the creative process in history.<sup>x</sup> Herein, we find that form and content, style and technique are like genetic codes. They reveal ancestry.

In essence then, even when the historical basis for similarities in form and content, style and technique are hidden or denied for political reasons in order to construct purist nativist authenticities, a combination of ethnographic and historical research can usually eventually determine the truth. In the instances given in this paper, these intercultural

histories demonstrate adaptive diffusions and creative processes in which artists in two developing countries in the colonial and nationalist periods creatively engaged foreign art forms. The results were emergent local modernisms which spoke deeply not only to local history but to the specifics of local lives in global history. Beyond the arts themselves, research itself is very much an art form. In turn, one scholar's work becomes material for diffusion, and if sufficiently inspirational – adaptation for new ends by new scholars in new contexts.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Fortunately, in light of the latter's romance with theory which renders the new art history virtually unintelligible due to the obsession with the critical theory and the likes of Baudrillard and Jameson, the classical analytic tradition continues while being similarly energized by concerns with the history and politics of artistic production and consumption (see O'Brien 2006, Zilberg 2007). See also the case of Caravaggio as revisited recently in an extraordinary combination of art history and social history in the book titled *M* (Robb 2000).

<sup>ii</sup> I have taken the term "combing" history from David Cohen (1994). In terms of art history and time, Henri Focillon's writings on time and the change of forms in time in a far more complex manner than one would assume from a linear rationalist perspective about time as a constant and forms as existing independently of time (1989, also see Hall 1984, Kubler 1962 and Reese 1985).

<sup>iii</sup> According to Elizabeth Morton (2003), Kingsley Sambo was executed by guerrillas for being a "sell out" because Europeans used to often come looking for him to buy his paintings. In fact, Sambo was murdered by ZANU guerrillas after he had lost a field radio that they had left in his safe keeping. It is a testament to his remarkable commitment to art, that while they burnt his Austin Healey in front of his house, he quickly painted two final paintings of the fire before they marched him into the bush and dismembered his body with machetes.

<sup>iv</sup> Marshall Mount in *African Art: The Years Since 1920* (1973/1989) best summarized the importance of this when he wrote that Frank McEwen "feels African artists should remain free from the 'corrupting' influence of Western Schools and express instead their innate African qualities . . . . " but that "McEwen's approach . . . is compromised by the museum environment in which the artists work or at least receive criticism. Painting and sculpture from major periods in the history of Western art and European-influenced, white Rhodesian work are displayed prominently on gallery walls. It would be a rare artist who could remain untouched when faced with this wealth of unfamiliar styles and techniques" (Mount 1989:119).

<sup>v</sup> Indeed, Frank McEwen himself began his career painting wild flowers in Southern France which he sold in Goupils and Co. in London in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

<sup>vi</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, New York. International Council/International Program Exhibition Records. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>vii</sup> Earlier in 1914, Paul Fechter had distinguished between "intensive Expressionism" and "extensive Expressionism" mirroring Kandinsky's notion that the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was "the century of the external" and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was "the century of the internal" (Vergo 1985:835). Later, the Expressionist slogan "Art comes from necessity, not from ability" was coined by the musician

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Arnold Schoenberg and a third form of expressionism emerged – “political Expressionism” which was a form of anarchistic pacifism (ibid.:838). Nevertheless, the Expressionists were a diverse group including artists such as Egon Schiele (1890-1918) who was imprisoned in 1912 for his scandalous eroticism and Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) who has called the Super-Fauve or “Die Oberwilding” laying bare the inner man (ibid:846).

<sup>viii</sup> It is important to stress the fact that modern art in Rhodesia existed within the colonial context of post-war colonial expansion and rising nationalism. While McEwen’s agenda was a form of proto-cultural nationalism (Zilberg 2001), his rejection of European talent was simply reverse racism as revealed at length by the South African artist Selby Mvusi in his open letter to the committee members of the First International Congress of African Art and his correspondence with Alfred Barr as recorded in the Barr Correspondence Series in the Museum of Modern Arts.

<sup>ix</sup> Fortunately Indonesia and Southeast Asia is an exceptional living laboratory because of the diversity working in history here. Though the sculptural and bronze traditions which formed the basis of the earlier debates speak to deeper structures in history, we are fortunate for the current fully mature state of the anthropological study of Southeast Asian textiles as the best instance of studying the productive integration and transmission of ideas, materials and technologies in art and society. Unfortunately, as this is a major task for a laboratory of scholars and as this paper has been prepared at such short notice I can only point briefly in that direction and have included some critical references in the bibliography. Suffice it to say, that in the larger disciplinary context given very briefly above, establishing links in such vastly separated geographic and completely different historic contexts allows us a highly idiosyncratic case for revisiting the central issue of diffusionism versus local genius. These two not necessarily exclusive explanatory models have been the two dominant polar paradigms in the different approaches that anthropologists, art historians and archaeologists, as well as linguists, have used in assessing cultural change in the Indonesian archipelago over the millennia and it is likely that in some contexts one will find strong evidence for one or the other in different domains and that in other contexts, and similarly in various domains, one might find a lesser or greater degree of both principles at work.

<sup>x</sup> The purpose of this paper is not to provide any overview of the extensive and fascinating literature both in Asia and the New World on the great debates of diffusionism. However for two classic instances in the Asian context, see Heine Geldern (1936, 1966) and for an excellent recent discussion of the case of debates over diffusionism in terms of megalithicism and neolithicism, see Glover (1998). Though the diffusion debate has been somewhat discredited in recent decades and particularly in the era of post-colonial studies, I believe that the earlier debates are worthy of re-examination in light of the data discussed in this paper and more importantly in light of the exceptional literature that has emerged on Southeast Asian textile traditions in the last decade (see Guy 1998, Zilberg 2007c). This paper simply hopefully points established and younger scholars alike to study art and society, specifically textile traditions in Indonesia, through a rigorous combination of scientific study and the most current processual understanding of culture as always in the making, emerging, in construction, never mind contested (Bruner 1989).

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UNESCO organized an online African regional conference on 26 and 27 April 2021 to strengthen the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property . Over 500 participants from 54 countries of the African region came together to discuss needs and priorities, stronger regional synergies, and country-specific contexts. The conference was opened by the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, Mr. Ernesto The Germ was a magazine established in 1850 at the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite movement by its founding members Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and, editor and "historian" of the movement, William Michael Rossetti. Born out of an idea of D G Rossetti's, the magazine sought to circulate the creative work and radical ideas of the Pre-Raphaelites as expressed in poetry, literature and art. In their own words, printed at the end of each issue, their mission was: With a view to obtain the thoughts of Artists, upon Nature as evolved in Art [â€] this Periodical ha Art and artists. Search the collection. Highlights from the collection. Landscapes, and scenes from modern urban and suburban life painted in bright, pure colours are typical. Impressionists often began (and sometimes completed) their paintings outdoors rather than in a studio. Their rapidly applied brushstrokes are often visible. Monet, The Water-Lily Pond, 1899. Today, the Impressionist paintings are some of the best-known and best-loved in the collection. It takes a leap of the imagination for us to realise how radical the movement was considered in its day. Viewing page 1 (5). 1. Methods: We performed a systematic review and meta-analysis of the prevalence of myopia and high myopia and estimated temporal trends from 2000 to 2050 using data published since 1995. The primary data were gathered into 5-year age groups from 0 to 100, in urban or rural populations in each country, standardized to definitions of myopia of -0.50 diopter (D) or less and of high myopia of -5.00 D or less, projected to the year 2010, then meta-analyzed within Global Burden of Disease (GBD) regions. Any urban or rural age group that lacked data in a GBD region took data from the most similar regi