

## Comparative study of bipolar disorder depictions in Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing as visual metaphors

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**Abstract:** The study provides an interpretive analysis of the creative vision shades and visual metaphor contexts in the depictions of bipolar disorder praxis in Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing from the interpretations of ten respondents. The study discusses the areas of portrayal convergences and divergences in the arts' articulation of bipolar disorder as a universal commonality, the evidences of effectual clarity and cathartic ambiance in the painting and drawing. More so, the cognitive channels through which plausible interpretive attempts are projected through visual metaphor and creative vision are assessed through the respondents' responses. The study adopts a viewer-response analysis approach in its attempt to come up with plausible deductions and extrapolations explaining the embedded significations in the painting and drawing. To deepen the purview on efficacy of art as stimulus for emotion activation, the study applies select theories explaining contexts of visual metaphor, creative vision, and erratic mood swings propelled by the painting and drawing. In the end, the study suggests that Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing are effectual attempts at depicting bipolar disorder syndrome, which yielded variant interpretations in line with art theories adumbrating the ability of art to instigate differing ideas and attributions.

**Keywords:** bipolar disorder, creative vision, visual metaphor, painting

*Art is born from man's need to understand himself and the world in which he lives' and 'the various other purposes served by art can be shown to depend on this basic cognitive function (Rudolf Arnheim 1969, 294)*

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AGATHOS, Volume 16, Issue 1 (30): 267-287, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.15163134  
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## **Introduction**

Our pre-field study findings indicate that beyond academic science journals and textbooks, attempts at sharing knowledge about bipolar disorder realities to the masses are found in visual, literary, and electronic media such as posters, poetry, plays, jingles, music, films, paintings, and drawings. This is because creative arts are widely recognized as efficacious channels of communication. Meanwhile, each of the aforementioned media comes with its distinct encumbrance(s); as it relates to the degree of encoding attainment and communicative effectiveness that propel enhance viewer or audience comprehension and assimilation propensity.

In addition, our preliminary study shows that the spread of dependable research-derived knowledge about bipolar disorder phenomenon, which will lead to its understanding, is neither deep nor widespread in Nigeria and around the globe, even though studies on its realities date back to the 5th century (Gulaid 2021). The major reason for this knowledge insufficiency revolves around the fact that bipolar disorder realities findings' dissemination takes place mostly through scholarly reports in academic science journals and textbooks, which mostly, select science scholars read.

This approach and tradition of spreading information about bipolar realities arguably continues to limit information permeation to the greater proportion of the masses. Consequently, those who are not opportune to access scholarly reports on bipolar disorder because of their illiteracy or disinterest arguably will continue in knowledge depravity or insufficiency. I

n Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria, a huge knowledge gap on the realities of bipolar disorder exists. This assertion is because most literature projecting knowledge and perspectives about mental illness in Nigeria usually explores mental disorders in general; while some focus mainly on depression and schizophrenia, giving inadequate attention to bipolar disorder (see Okpalauwaekwe et al. 2017; Adewuya et al. 2008; Kabir et al. 2004). Thus, this study discusses the success and practicality of utilizing painting and drawing as media for bipolar disorder information dissemination by subjecting a painting and a drawing by Marta Araujo and Sohrad Allaie respectively to a control field experiment to generate and analyze select viewers' responses.

### **Research methodology**

The research methodology adopted for the study is an innovative hybrid technique, designed specifically to adjust accordingly to the study's purpose, which is to comparatively discuss the shades of visual metaphors in Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing. The aim is to understand more the arts' bipolar disorder portrayal contexts in single frames and interpretively examine the viewers' response convergences and divergences gathered in field sampling. More so, part of our purpose is to learn from a plausible comparative analysis of the communicative effectiveness of the select painting of Marta Araujo and the drawing of Sohrad Allaie, to understand more the advantages and disadvantages of the application of paintings and drawings as media for communicating bipolar disorder realities and praxis. In our attempt to find out the success or otherwise of both depictions from the perspectives of a select study group, specifically, the evidence of effectual clarity and cathartic ambiance in both depictions according to the respondents are designated as primary areas of interest. The study adopts a comparative analysis approach in discussing the respondents' deductions and the variables that propel their responses. This approach enables us to provide an interpretation of the shades and nuances of the select viewers' response to the visual metaphors and creative visions in the painting of Marta Araujo and the drawing of Sohrad Allaie as depictions of 'bipolar disorder' praxis. To highlight the efficacy of the painting and the drawing as texts capable of emotion activation and attribution convolution, the study utilizes select theories explaining contexts of visual metaphor, creative vision, and variable mood swings emanating from art viewing.

### **Study subjects and location of the study**

Another aspect of the control study is that we selected the Department of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka as the study location and 30 undergraduate students, 15 girls, and 15 boys (with the age range of 15 to 21 years) offering an elective course in the Department as the study subjects and respondents. We selected the study subjects and the location because the lead researcher is the course coordinator in the Department of Theatre and Films, University of Nigeria (location); hence, we got the certainty of the availability of the study subjects on the specific date and time of the experiment.

### **Data gathering approach and instrument**

The kind of research result we envisaged from the opinion sampling and viewer response, which is to find out the interpretive manifestations resulting from the viewing of the depictions of bipolar disorder in Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing influenced the research method we adopted. We adopted a qualitative research approach, involving gathering empirical data through opinion sampling of a designated number of subjects (undergraduate students) in a control field study. The controlled study approach includes the following variables and modalities. An aspect of the control variables utilized in this study is opinion sampling generated from the select viewers' responses in an impromptu technique, whereby the potential respondents and the research assistants<sup>1</sup> were not pre-informed about the study but at the study location a few minutes before commencing the sampling. The purpose of this approach is to negate the possibility of the potential respondents attempting to research the study items (Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing). Yet another aspect of the control study is that we prepared a questionnaire with five questions. 1. What is this painting communicating to you? 2. What is this drawing communicating to you? 3. How do you come about your interpretation of this painting? 4. How do you come about your interpretation of this drawing? 5. Do you think the painting and drawing are communicating the same thing or message or otherwise? We photocopied 30 copies of each of the questionnaires, Marta Araujo's painting, and Sohrad Allaie's drawing depicting bipolar disorder for the opinion sampling. On the day of data gathering, the researchers<sup>2</sup> arrive and wait for the students who are unaware of the entire research plan to sit accordingly. By 8 am, the seated students await their lecture to commence. Then the lead researcher walks in with the course lecturer to inform them that we (the researchers) need 5 minutes of their time to conduct an impromptu opinion sampling

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<sup>1</sup> Ten research assistants involved in the data gathering are Chioma Alaike, Victoria C. Ugwu, Princess K. Anyanwu, Jennifer C. Ezema, Lydia I. Ani-Raphael, Queen N. Abraham, Chibuzo Sonia Okonkwo, Chiagozie I. Ozoigboanugo, Joseph Ukoha, and Mr. Kingsely E. Duhu. All the research assistants are students of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

<sup>2</sup> Members of the study team include Dr. Emeka Aniago (lead researcher), Dr. Francisca Onwuasonya, Mr. Chukwudi Okaforocha, Mr. Sabastine Ugwuoke, Dr. Chikelue Akabuike, Dr. Johnson Arua and Dr. Thank-God Igwenagu as co-researchers.

before they can commence their lecture. They agreed to be part of the research, and the research assistants promptly distributed copies of the questionnaire and the painting and drawing to them. The instruction given for the proper conduct of the opinion sampling is that they are to study the painting and the drawing and respond to the questions in the questionnaire in writing. They are not to communicate with one another and not to access their phones. They complied with the instructions as the researchers and the research assistants supervised their conduct for conformity. After the stipulated time for the respondents' written responses, the research assistants retrieved 30 written responses for in-depth analysis thereafter. We thanked the respondents and the research assistants for their time and acceptance to partake in the impromptu opinion sampling.

### **Literature review: Art as visual metaphor and communication medium**

Studies describe art variously as an intricate creative exteriorization of subsisting interiority through creative vision, "creative thinking" or "thinking through images" (Potebnya 1990, 163). In arts, creative vision represents a medium of communicating aesthetics, ecology, imagination, social contexts, history, emotion, worldview, inclination, politics, and intentions. Therefore, art is expected to propel its observer beyond the peripheral or the literal denotations because every piece of art is a visual metaphor, which subsumes layers of meaning, "consciousness and imagination" (Petrenko & Korotchenko 2012, 532). The embedded consciousness and imagination in art propel viewers to "feel as though they have witnessed history and build upon their knowledge of the nuances within the image" (Deuel 2013, 4). In reliable studies explaining various art forms as communication media, plausible interpretations elucidate how the utility of art extends beyond amusement and leisure. These studies are "in accord, that art is an efficacious medium of communication, through which artists encode ideas, emotions, information, worldviews, and knowledge for viewers' interpretation, reflection, appreciation, fulfilment, and enrichment" (Onuora et al. 2021, 2). Metaphorically, artists have power, which is not just to create "but also to transform" because "for as long as art has existed, it has been socially engaged" (Gorman 2015, 4). The idea here is that art in different ways exhibits varying propensities to project lucid information, rouse, or dowse mood intensity. These widely acknowledged qualities of art, intricately combine "to recalibrate,

twist, or re-aggregate people's worldviews, ideologies, and inclinations" and in some instances, they help "to reinvent myths and legends, and to heal, revive, infuriate, or emotionalize people" (Onuora et al. 2021, 2). Consequently, it is plausible "to claim that art has values that transcend or reach beyond the so-called autonomously aesthetic" (Kostopoulos 2011, 523). In many ways "art's utilities and functions, go way beyond the presentation of an aesthetic presence alone, but include projection of strong and efficacious ambiance, which encodes emotions, multiple layers and shades of information and knowledge, didacticism, and political realities" (Onuora et al. 2021, 4). The above conceptualization encapsulates cogent suppositions in theories defining art as a multiplex embodiment of visual metaphors. These suppositions variously elucidate that an art meaning-making process consciously propels an observer to seek deeper interpretation of the appreciable variables embedded in the art in the quest to generate plausibility within specific contexts (Arnheim 1994; Petrenko & Korotchenko 2012; Deuel 2013; Onuora et al. 2021). The description of art as an embodiment of visual metaphors revolves around the premise that "the thoughts, beliefs, values, and emotions of artists are inescapably represented in their works – and on some occasions, intentionally depicted" (Rustin 2008, 2).

Interpreting art as a web of metaphorical connotations and significations indicates that art can complicate viewers' interpretation when its complexity "extends the thread of recognition and understanding" beyond the literal and the immediate (Elderfield 2006, 44). An art viewer who intends to achieve a compelling, dense, and vivid interpretation of any form of art, according to art scholars and theorists such as Onuora et al. (2021), Okpara et al. (2020), Goehr (2014), Haas (2011), Tan (2000), Eagleton (1990) and Dickie (1984), requires appropriate cognitive density and sufficient knowledge about art in general. In addition, the above-mentioned scholars variously explain that such an individual requires sufficient knowledge of the culture, which the art represents, sufficient knowledge of the artists' works, pedigree, life history, and the work's specific social ecology, to explain the perceived embedded metaphors plausibly.

### **Metaphors in art**

According to Michael M. Osborn (2009, 654), "metaphor occurs when we use words or visual constructions to make novel references in atypical contexts" thus "metaphor can dress our ideas more clearly and

colourfully” and “the most basic use of metaphor is to expand the reach and repair the inadequacy of our referential system” and “improve communication effectiveness”. More so, “by creating associations with colourful, picturesque points of comparison, metaphor can raise interest and magnify the importance of subjects” (Osborn 2009, 654). The idea here is that metaphor represents a rhetorical strategy, adopted for its capacity to promote the communicator’s goals and to enable communication in many ways (Ibid.). The supposition here is that metaphor is essentially a perspective; consequently, the use of a metaphor purposively helps in framing messages, which draws viewers to articulate, relish, deduce, contemplate, and decode. Furthermore, metaphors create ambiguity, which elicits contextual connotations leading to differing interpretations because every image naturally conjures multiple attributions as each viewer takes a stance by aligning to their point of view. On point-of-view as a reason behind viewers’ interpretation variance, scholarly evidence indicates that “a visual metaphor is always a mystery for a viewer” and metaphor “often combines incongruous attributes of various objects, immediately reversing the usual perception” (Petrenko and Korotchenko 2012, 539). Illuminating on the supposition that perception variances will unavoidably occur when art viewers present their interpretations, Robert L. Solso (2003, 1) contends that “there are as many ways of looking at art as there are viewers of art” hence, the “huge diversity is one indication that we humans are a highly distinctive lot of creative people”. Buttressing, Solso notes that variant descriptions occur because “there are no universal principles of perception and cognition that apply to all of us as we view and appreciate art” (Ibid.). He observes that art perception and description variance occurs because each art viewer “brings to the viewing of art an entire set of past experiences and expectations that largely influences what we perceive and how we interpret what we see” (Solso 2003, 3). A prime highlight in Solso’s insight is that the interpretation of art by an individual represents that individual’s relative and subsisting knowledge depth and density about the context or culture-specific literal connotations of the embedded motifs and attributes that combine to form art. Therefore, the “construction of metaphoric meaning begins by viewing the work as a whole, becoming aware of the visual attributes and nuances, and then by asking, other than the obvious, what do these works suggest” (Feinstein 1982, 28). What Feinstein’s contribution suggests is that visual attributes

naturally mean more than one thing because of the naturally occurring diversity in people's point-of-views, worldviews, inclinations, cognitive depth, and knowledge density.

In attempts to arrive at plausible and dependable art interpretation, one of the established approaches to the reading of metaphor is the semiotic theory. According to Leeds-Hurwitz, semiotic theory is "particularly useful as a tool to examine the misunderstandings common to intercultural communication" and how "texts (which could be a word, image, film, magazine, song, ritual, etc) is used to construct meanings" (2009, 876). This assertion revolves around the premise that "semiotic theory shows meaning as jointly constructed by multiple participants rather than as intrinsic to the sign; as such, semiotics can be a valuable method of deconstructing, or analyzing how communication works" (Ibid). Hence, understanding and situating the meaning of visual attributes usually revolve around contexts and locale-specific attributions that accord with specific interpretive community praxis or are in line with the specific social construction of reality. Therefore, for an individual to carry out a dependable interpretation of art, the individual needs to understand that "visual forms are instances of presentational symbolization, the interpretation of which ranges on a continuum from literal to metaphoric" (Feinstein 1982, 29).

### **Bipolar disorder: Praxis and realities**

Bipolar disorder "previously referred to as manic depression" is "a chronic mental disorder that creates sporadic and unpredictable changes in mood, energy, and concentration" (National Institute of Mental Health 2020). Bipolar disorder is a globally occurring phenomenon, with "extensive presence across land and time" (Gulaid 2021, 1). It afflicts between 2% – 3% of the world's population, approximately 45 million people in 2019, men, women, and children regardless of race and class, a statistic that places it as the sixth leading cause of disability worldwide (Strakowski 2020; WHO 2021). In relevant studies "there are descriptions of mania and depression dating back to the 5th century found in Greco-Roman writings" as psychiatric and mental conditions (Gulaid 2021, 1). The application of the term 'bipolar disorder' for the comprehensive description of a distinct kind of 'mania' and 'depression' makes it "one of the youngest forms of major mental illness about an official diagnosis" and "yet, it is simultaneously one of the oldest in regards to recorded depictions of



it” (Gulaid 2021, 1). Pacesetting studies by Aretaeus of Cappadocia laid the foundation for the modern understanding of bipolar disorder and he was the first to link mania with melancholia, while Kahlbaum, best known for establishing the condition of cyclothymia, introduced the ‘circular insanity’ and ‘insanity of double form’ concepts in 1863 (Angst & Marneros 2000). Carl Friedrich Flemming propounded the ‘changeable dysthymia’ theory, while Emil Kraepelin greatly enhanced the categorization of mental disorders (Angst & Marneros 2000; Yildiz et al. 2016). Wilhelm C. J. K. Weygandt developed mental disorders categorization into a manic stupor (a hazy manic state), agitated melancholia (an irritable depressive state), and unproductive mania (an elated manic state), and Carl Wernicke elucidates the subtle divisions within manic-depressive illness (Angst & Marneros 2000; Yildiz et al. 2016).

Its dominant symptom is mood fluctuation from extreme highs, (whereby the subject exhibits or feels overly excitable and energized), to extreme lows, during which they may feel hopeless and indifferent (National Institute of Mental Health, 2020). The mood upswings or ‘highs’ are classified as ‘manic episodes’, and in less severe cases they are categorized as hypo-manic episodes, whereas, the mood downswings or ‘lows’ are referred to as depressive episodes (National Institute of Mental Health 2020). “Bipolar disorder is a severe, complicated, and often misunderstood disorder that can have serious impacts on a person’s quality of life, sense of self-worth, and overall health” thus, “people with bipolar disorder often have trouble finding employment and holding relationships” (Kennedy 2021, 15). Studies imply that “bipolar disorder is found to be either genetically inherited or brought about by a problem with brain chemistry that triggers the bipolar disorder through stress, lack of sleep, substance use, and difficult life events” (Feingold 2013, 127). There are three categories of bipolar disorder, namely ‘bipolar disorder 1’ whereby the subject exhibits severe manic episodes that may result in hospitalization and the ‘bipolar 11 disorder’ which comes with depressive and hypo-manic episodes, and ‘Cyclothymic Disorder’ (cyclothymia) is characterized by long-lasting depressive and manic symptoms that do not fit the criteria of the aforementioned category (Gulaid 2021, 1-2).

The therapeutic remedy for bipolar disorder for both acute and long-term remedy is pharmaceutical drugs classified as mood stabilizers (Patel 2021). The most effective therapy for individuals disorganized

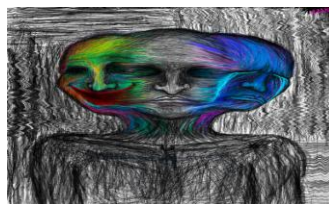
Francisca Onwuasonya, Chukwudi Okaforocha, Sabastine Ugwuoke, Chikelue Akabuike, Emeka Aniago, Johnson Arua and Thank-God Igwenagu with bipolar disorder includes “medication, education and psychotherapy” (Feingold 2013, 127).

### **Data interpretation: comparative of a painting and a drawing**

The next stage of the study is an analysis of the written responses by the 12 respondents. The questions we asked aim to propel the respondents to describe and share their perceptions and the reasons behind their line of thoughts regarding Marta Araujo’s painting and Sohrad Allaie’s drawing. We analyzed the respondents' responses to appreciate their inputs, which helped in learning about the effectiveness of the painting and drawing as functional media of communicating bipolar disorder praxis, and the factors that did aid their accurate or inaccurate interpretation of painting and drawing. The primary research aim is to see the level at which the painting and drawing speak to the students. Therefore, we want to find out if the painting and drawing project the same ideas to the students and to understand the convergences and divergences in their interpretations. First, our analysis hinges on the premise that art is a universal common, a product of human creative vision, and a communication medium that speaks to all humans nay differently. Thus, a painting can connote similar and dissimilar ideas to different viewers. The deep metaphor of art is the appreciation that art subsumes the emotions, consciousness, inclination, ideology, and agenda of the artist. More so, art as a versatile and efficacious medium of human communication aids in the sharing of ideas, worldviews, and social contexts. As a means of extending ideas, artists such as painters and sculptors have continued to represent their perspectives on human ecology and realities within choice approaches. In applying a painting as a means of interrogating or projecting human realities such as health and wellbeing, a painting consciously or unconsciously projects social contexts such as social ecology, cognitive configurations, and worldviews.



Picture 1 is a Painting by Marta Araujo



Picture 2 is a drawing by Sohrad Allaie

### **The two artists**

Marta Araujo is a Spanish artist, illustrator, painter, and tattooer from Cordoba Spain. Her works are displayed on Saatchi Art website<sup>3</sup>. Prominent works by Araujo as displayed on the Saatchi Art website are paintings that fall under the categories of impressionism and abstract impressionism. Some of her abstract impressionism paintings are 'David', 'Mess', 'Dog Eyes', 'What Am I Doing', and 'It could be you'. Her abstract painting are 'Deep Sea', 'Winter car crash' and 'Too many drugs', while her impressionistic paintings are 'Blurry Face', 'Flowers in my skin', 'Blurry neighbourhood', 'Wounded Heart' and 'Bipolar' which is her painting understudy in this paper. She observes that her painting tries to represent what it feels like to be a bipolar, and this painting is from a collection of paintings depicting spectrums and shades of mental illness.

Sohrad Allaie who captioned 'Picture 2' through an e-mail communication with the lead researcher, states: the inspiration for my art comes from my life struggles, battle with autoimmune disease, two liver transplants surgeries, comas, hospitals, chemotherapy and battle with addiction. I learned a lot during my sickness, I learned to appreciate my life and live a life worth remembering. Each art piece represents something about me; there is a meaning behind them all. This is a drawing painting representing bipolar disorder. This is a print on gloss card stock.

### **Samples of 10 viewer responses and analysis of their interpretations of Araujo's Painting and Allaie's Drawing as visual metaphors depicting bipolar disorder**

The field study was undertaken on 31st January 2024, and the time of the study was 9: 15 am to 9: 30am. Thirty-two (32) students were seated and they all got the questionnaire and copies of the painting and drawing. Twenty-two (22) students handed in their written responses. From the twenty-two submitted viewer responses, ten reviewer responses were selected for interpretation to learn the dimensions and variables embedded in their responses. The approach for our interpretation of the 10 viewer responses is to state exactly the viewer response and provide sufficient analysis of it, and at the end provide a conclusion encompassing all the 10 responses.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.saatchiart.com/martaaraujoart>

### Respondent No.1

The pictures show the heart not only the faces. What we put there sometimes is different from what we carry in our hearts. Not everyone who smiles is okay. Some are bleeding inside, tears. (Nnadi, Chinenyenwa F. 2024)

In comment number one, Chinenyenwa Faith Nnadi interprets the faces as the 'exteriority' of the 'interiority'. She suggests that the faces metaphorically relay the state of the mind. She claims that a face naturally represents the emotional state of the mind, even though an individual may decide to present a face as a strategic disguise to achieve concealment, widely classified as 'impression management' (see Metts 2009). Nnadi's contribution suggests that the viewer interprets and decides if the facial expression is deception, a smokescreen, or an honest relay of subsisting emotions, and this response validates the idea that images contain metaphors, which propels inexact interpretations by different individuals due to their different point-of-views (see Solso 2003). In her interpretation, Nnadi perceives emotional relay through the painting and drawing, however, she did not indicate that the painting and drawing are representations of bipolar disorder mood swings.

### Respondent No. 2

Picture 1 tries to communicate the pain and suffering that the woman in the picture is going through. Tears rolling down her cheek signify or communicate pains, which she may be going through in a circumstance. The exact image/picture behind the picture of the crying face shows her imagination of living a life free of sorrow. But in all, according to my understanding, it tells or rather communicates the idea of living in pain and the imagination of living without pain, i.e. living a free and usual life as one wishes (Jonah, Catherine O. 2024).

In her interpretation, respondent 2, Catherine Ochanya Jonah observes that the tears rolling down the eyes on one of the faces of the woman in 'picture 1' signify pain due to subsisting circumstances. Jonah's interpretive method aligns with the concepts of semiotics and attribution whereby 'tears' cascading down from a down-cast eye connotes agony; hence, the female is in pain. Jonah thinks that the face without tears signifies imagination of 'life free of sorrow' because the facial expression indicates a smile. However, Jonah fails to directly link or classify the image as representative of bipolar disorder praxis.

### Respondent No. 3

Picture 1 'The Illusion of Happiness' depicts an illusion of happiness, because the woman looks happy on the outside, but is passing through

depression and pain. Picture 2 'The Realm of Existence' depicts the metaphysical realms of creation. (Anozie, Divine C. 2024)

Respondent no. 3, Divine Chinaza Anozie thinks that picture 1 embodies 'an illusion of happiness', because on the faces are expressions of 'happiness' and 'pain' respectively, thus she boldly tags the picture, the 'Illusion of Happiness'. 'Picture 2', Anozie thinks it represents 'the metaphysical realm of creation, and she tags the drawing 'The Realm Existence'. She did not link or call the painting or the drawing a representation of bipolar disorder.

#### Respondent No. 4

Picture 2 possesses three heads; from my observation, the three heads portray an entity/human with three different emotional states. The first state is happiness, the second one in the middle shows indifference or a conserved feeling, while the third face shows that the person is weeping. In picture 1, the picture, which possesses two heads, has two emotions it's portraying. One face is a woman emotionally traumatized and the other shows the woman is in a relaxed position either thinking of her life or about her ugly situation (Ezeh, Ebube E. 2024).

Respondent 4, Ebube Elijah Ezeh concludes that in picture 2, the drawing depicts three different emotional states – happiness, indifference or conserved feeling, and agony – from an individual. He observes that picture 1 which depicts two faces of a woman relays two emotional states – traumatized and meditation on life circumstances in a relaxed mood. Ezeh in his analysis does not refer to bipolar disorder.

#### Respondent No. 5

Picture 2 depicts the underlying emotions of man, which in this case shows happiness, and satisfaction on the outside while on the inside is in agony (suffering in silence). Picture 1 gives me the same message as picture 2 but some part of regret is emphasized in it. (Omeh, Cynthia O. 2024)

Response number 5, Cynthia Onyinyechi Omeh sees the following underlying emotions – happiness, satisfaction, and agony – emanating from a man in picture 2, and picture 1 relays the same message as picture 2 suggestion of regret embedded in one of the faces.

#### Respondent No. 6

Picture 1 depicts a woman struggling with challenges. She wants to succeed but many things are hindering her. She is not OK with the situation in her life. She is crying meaning she is battling with something. Picture 2 shows a man who has a lot on his shoulders. He is a pillar of the family and he is looked upon to do things or make provisions. The journey is not an easy one for him. He needs to make out something for himself (Anyanwu, Princess K. 2024).

In her response, respondent number 6, Princess Kasarachi Anyanwu sees a woman with excruciating life situation(s) typified by the tears cascading down her face though the face suggests she strives for triumph. Anyanwu did not name the life situation bedevilling the woman, thus she did allude to bipolar disorder in her analysis. In picture 2, Anyanwu sees a man who is heavily burdened by life and the attendant troubling circumstances, Anyanwu did not link the drawing or the painting to bipolar disorder.

#### Respondent No. 7

In picture 2, there are three faces on a white and black background, one face is blue, the middle face is blue and the last face is a rainbow. The faces to me depict a person that has three faces that someone can be a kind of person or show a kind of colour to a specific emotion. Picture 1 has two conjoined female faces with one crying and the other blank. A female can decide to hide her weakness from someone or some people but die and cry right inside and claim she is fine, but she can decide to show that to some people she feels a connection. (Elijah, Favour C. 2024)

Respondent number 7, Favour Chigozie Elijah observes that three faces predicted with different colours on a white and black background in picture 1 depict different emotional states. Elijah observes that picture 1 signifies two kinds of emotional states – happiness and grief – which individuals choose to communicate at will. Elijah alludes to the utility and functionality of the facial expression, which each individual can appropriate deliberately to achieve specific intention(s). Elijah's interpretation of the functionality of facial expression is congruent; however, he does not see bipolar disorder strictly in the two arts.

#### Respondent No. 8

Picture 2 depicts a person suffering from multiple personality disorder, depression, abuse, trauma, and addiction, thus needing urgent therapy. Picture 1 depicts a two-faced person not in terms of hypocrisy but in terms of not expressing herself truly. A woman who has hidden her true self from the world; maybe because she has been hurt so many times. (Nwachukwu, Sopoluchukwu I. 2024)

In reviewer response number 8, the respondent Sopoluchukwu Israel Nwachukwu observes that picture 2 depicts a person suffering from multiple personality disorder, which could have been triggered by factors such as depression, abuse, trauma, or addiction. In picture 1 with a two-faced person, Nwachukwu sees a woman in agony due to multiple excruciating circumstances (s) through the face with tears, but

the other face suggests concealment and deep introversion. He did not link the painting or the drawing to bipolar disorder directly.

### Respondent No. 9

Picture 2 shows three faces. To me, the head in the middle is the normal face of a human while the faces at the sides show the two major different emotions humans feel – happiness and sadness. All the various emotions the human mind goes through. The happy face does not seem very happy though and looks like a façade. Overall, it shows a face deep in emotional turmoil struggling to know which emotion to show the world. Picture 1 is similar to picture ‘2’ because somehow reminds one of the theatre where ‘happy face’ and ‘sad face’ show two different emotions that the humans feel – badness and happiness. However, much like the first picture, the ‘happy’ face is not at all happy but looks like a façade. (Anene, Emeka 2024)

Respondent number 9, Emeka Anene sees in picture 2, three kinds of emotional states. The face in the middle depicts 'the normal human face', while the other two faces signify happiness and sadness respectively. The ‘happy face’ this respondent thinks is not exuberant but a measured display suggesting some form of concealment or disguise. The respondent thinks the depicted individual relays subsumed turmoil, hence, she battles with either being seen as melancholic or not. This respondent concludes that picture 1 is similar to picture 2 because it depicts the two dominant human emotional states – happiness and sadness. The ‘happy face’ in picture 1, the respondent observes, is similar to the ‘happy face’ in picture 2 because it suggests a smokescreen.

### Respondent No. 10

Picture ‘2’ three faces are seen but only one body is visible. To me, this picture shows or makes me feel that a person who is sad and happy and overwhelmed with reality has to wear different faces just to get by the day, whereas the mixture of the colours tries to give a childlike feeling. Picture ‘1’ shows two faces, a crying face and a smiling face with the heads up. This picture shows a female who has two personalities and the tangled hairs with the two heads signify some female who is caught up with the reality of a situation. It could be life, it could be any situation, and it could even be that nemesis caught up with her. This is because of the expressions on the faces. (Azowa, Ifeanyi 2024)

The respondent number 10, Ifeanyi Azowa sees in picture 2, an individual with three faces which projects an individual who deliberately wears sad, happy, or indifferent face as his situational adjustment and survival tactics. The idea that the colours utilized by the artist gave a childlike feeling to the image is hard to grasp. This respondent sees in picture 1 a woman with two ‘personalities’ –

happiness and sadness, typified by the crying face and smiling face respectively. This respondent observes that the heads with two faces are co-joined and that the long hairs from both heads are entangled. The entangled hairs suggest that the woman is caught up in a difficult situation, which could be the consequences of her action(s) or life's unavoidable vagaries. These deductions are propelled by the facial expressions in the painting and the drawing; however, this respondent did not link the arts with bipolar disorder.

### **Conclusion**

This study is an interpretive analysis of ten viewer responses to a painting of Marta Araujo and a drawing of Sohrad Allaie. The ten respondents at the time of the study were undergraduate students of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study examined the viewer responses independently to appreciate their interpretations to see the areas of convergences and divergences. As explained in the research methodology section, the study was carried out as an impromptu study as a means of understanding how the painting and drawing communicate the intentions of the artists to the viewer. While the two artists unambiguously produced the painting and drawing as their ways of communicating the realities of bipolar disorder to the viewing public, our experiment indicates that the viewers could not immediately link the images to bipolar disorder. However, each of the ten respondents was able to appreciate the two distinct manifestations in individuals who are suffering from bipolar disorder, which are the episodes of mood swings from acute sadness to effervescent happiness. An analysis of the shades of visual metaphor and creative vision in Marta Araujo's painting and Sohrad Allaie's drawing as depictions of bipolar disorder praxis in the ten viewer responses indicate evidence of perception convergences and divergences. However, we are suggesting that viewers of the select paintings of Marta Araujo are expected to come up with similar and dissimilar interpretations, even though their interpretations can be variously classified as intelligible, plausible, and tenable within specific point-of-views regarding the metaphors they perceive because metaphors are a source of deep and dense 'ideas'. The viewer responses demonstrate that the painting and drawing subsume worldviews, which defines the social context and social construction of reality. Worldview represents "the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world in all its diversity and complexity" and it



“functions as a ‘map of reality’ that people use to order their lives” (Rousseau and Billingham 2018, 3). The suggestions by the ten respondents that the facial expressions indicate pain, sadness, happiness, or indifference are evidence of attributions emanating from local or universal social construction reality, that ‘tears’ from down-cast eyes signify pain or sadness whereas ‘smile’ on a face indicates happiness. More so, the respondents indicate that humans are capable of disguise, deceit, and concealment; hence, literal interpretations may not be accurate at all times, which project the concept of visual metaphor. The experiment validates a given number of scholarly postulations. An example includes the theory that a work of art is a metaphor, which usually propels similar and dissimilar interpretations to viewers. The interpretations art viewers come up with usually reflect the viewers' cognitive development and density, art knowledge depth, and knowledge of the focused artists' works, background, history, and inclinations. The experiment indicates that effectual clarity is difficult whereas the cathartic ambiance is witnessed in all the ten responses. To deepen our purview on the efficacy of these paintings as stimuli for emotion activation, we applied conceptual frames explaining contexts of visual metaphor, creative vision, and erratic mood swings about art. In art, there is an intended metaphor and an unintended metaphor. When an artist deliberately encodes ideas through symbols to create a specific meaning, the metaphor becomes an intended metaphor. However, when a viewer concludes that the embedded motifs, symbols, designs, hues, and shapes in an art denote a particular meaning that is not strictly the intended meaning and message by the artist, the metaphor that leads to the viewer's conclusion becomes an unintended metaphor. Thus, it is not wrong to suggest that art may mean or project variant ideas and messages beyond the intentions and calculations of the artist. This study's inspiration emanates from the curious observation of conscious efforts by some artists who have applied painting and drawing to popularize the realities of bipolar disorder. A metaphor may contain a group's or an individual's ideology, worldview, and inclinations. Metaphor possesses the potential to spark a conflagration of thought and this phenomenon typifies the essence of creativity (Osborn 656). The semiotic analysis approach can be applied to discuss various kinds of texts such as speech, image, film, song, and activities to construct meanings in line with extant worldview, knowledge, and agenda (see Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz).

In the end, our study suggests that the paintings of Marta Araujo and Sohrad Allaie are intelligent attempts at depicting bipolar disorder syndrome in a single frame despite their inclusion of variant praxis. We also explained that dense interpretive cognitive immersion by viewers of art is not usually a straightforward conclusion of the encoded information by the artist; rather it is dependent on the viewers' inclination and perspectives. We also espoused instances of divergences in interpretations by various categories of viewers by discussing the following variables. The degree of consciousness activation achievable by different works of art on each individual; how long these activations can last in different individuals; the reasons behind the attainment of greater or lesser activations in different people; and how the efficacy of works of art can be properly harnessed. We demonstrated that art can speak to all categories of viewers and each viewer naturally attempts to decode art through his or her subsisting interpretive and cognitive capacities. We observed also that no two individuals have provided exact interpretive analysis of the same art in our many years of scholarship and workshop experiments. However, there is the possibility of similarity in the results of interpretations of the same art. Again, art as a text is a language and because individuals' knowledge of a language varies, it is logical and plausible to say that the metaphor and density of a text will not yield exactly to the same degree to the concerned viewers, due to the reasons we adduced above.

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