

Review of: "Unearthing the Cultural Values of Personalities in Photorealism Portraiture: The Iconography of the Works of the Ghanaian Fine Artist, Samuel Otu"

P.M. de Araújo

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

A formal/ 'panofskyan' standpoint is adopted by the authors as a methodology of analysis – and I would like to discuss this choice.

Portraiture also creates these characters – immortalizing them as the subject matter of an image. This is the key element that forces us to go beyond plastic attributions, technological advances and historicism: the portrait suggests a 'subject being' in the making by other 'subject being' (its author, even when we think of a self-portrayed image) – while the representational purpose which includes "...emotional, social, political and cultural elements (Lansroth 2015 as cited by Wango 2020)", as well remarked by the authors.

In other words, when we look into the eyes his characters, we also encounter Samuel Otu's. So, by diving into his **creation processes**, we get a symbolic/powerful glimpse into the questions that surround him and his characters. I must quote Otu, himself: "It is interesting to find that a story could be told without words by the look on a person's face. The message could be loud yet without sound".

So, more than following a stylistic movement or being placed as art, I assume that the contemporary analysis on portraiture must consider what's beyond formal characteristics: its power of condensing character, context, social/cultural claims in one image, as the authors themselves state: "The portrait goes beyond the representation of a subject whose life forms part of the historical narratives of nations to reflect his inner moral attitudes." – I understand that the article lacks theoretical references that could support this important conclusion. For me, Panofsky's method is outdated and doesn't follow the greatness of the object. However, I must admit that the analysis, as required by the parameters of this particular method, is properly developed.

Besides this fundamental question concerning the approach adopted by the authors, the article is well written (please, be careful with typos/misspellings such as Otu → Out / "photorealistic artworks areN'T (?) simply representations but an expression of the deep-seated love of parents for their children").