



YEMISI SHYLLON
MUSEUM OF ART
PAN-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

Artwork Information Sheet **25**

DAVID DALE'S SAFE JOURNEY



Safe Journey, David Dale, metal foil, 1997, 100 x 47 cm, ©Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art.

INTRODUCTION

David Dale was one of Bruce Onobrakpeya students and artists who drew close to him for his creativity in the art of metal foil or plate etching in Nigeria. "Safe Journey," Dale's metal foil piece in the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, is a unique presentation of metal foil art.

ARTIST'S PROFILE

David Hebert Dale was known as a prolific and versatile artist. Prince Yemisi Shyllon, in (Uwazuoke, 2019), noted that Dale is "great and celebrated", describing him as "a great experimental and innovative artist, whose masterpieces can be found with reputable collectors both within and outside Nigeria." Despite grappling with an illness that took his life in 2019, Dale explored 23 art media including stained-glass paintings, mosaic designs, beadwork, etchings, charcoal and watercolor paintings, metal sculpture among others in such a way that one could describe him as an experimentalist.

Dale (b. 1947) was one of the eight children of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ernest Dale, born in Kano, Nigeria. His father was a Scottish expatriate and his mother was a Nigerian from Niger Delta. Dale spent his early years in Kent, England, with his aunt Johanna Ernest, where he completed primary school and began secondary school before moving to Nigeria to continue his education at St. Gregory's College, Obalende, Lagos. At St. Gregory's, he met Bruce Onobrakpeya, his then art tutor who influenced his choice of an art career. David Dale, like his mentor, graduated from Ahmadu Bello University in 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Graphics Design, much to the displeasure of his parents, who were not supportive of his chosen career.

After school, he worked as an apprentice with Onobrakpeya for a while before taking up the position of Advertising Manager in the City Group Organization and Akrel Advertising Agency Ltd, located in Western House, Lagos. He maintained this

job while teaching part-time in the Department of Architecture at the University of Lagos, for thirteen years. He was later awarded a Doctorate in Arts from the prestigious Yaba College of Technology. While in advertising, he rose to the rank of Senior Advertising Manager. He was also a graphic consultant for the African Architectural Technology Exhibition for FESTAC '77. Dale subsequently started his brand, the now-defunct Dale & Dale Gallery and studio.

Many of his early artworks explored the energy and variety of urban life in Lagos. His lines were meager, eliminating excessive adornment to create a spontaneous connection to his viewers. According to Hourglass (2014), his move to advertising may have influenced this almost minimalist approach. Additionally, Dale explored metaphors and symbolic themes in his art through naturalism, sometimes merging it with abstract forms. He particularly enjoyed naturalistic forms and was in the habit of using them to appreciate his natural environment and sometimes to lampoon societal issues. Sobowale (2019) notes that Dale expressed his passion for birds which he found to be amazing to watch, devoting time to observe them in his compound.

Dale's art, particularly his lino and foil printmaking methods were greatly influenced by Onobrakpeya. Being enthusiastic about media, Dale went beyond printmaking to incorporate numerous materials into his art and this took him places.

Dale has exhibited in numerous countries across continents, including; USA, Canada, Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, Germany, the former USSR, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Cuba, Japan, and Holland - by 1997, he had featured in 58 exhibitions, worldwide. His works can be found in major collections including the collections of Swedish royalty; The Governor-General of Australia; Former Prime Minister of Tanganyika, Julius Nyerere; Ford Foundation, New York; Howard University, Washington DC; The Nigerian Stock Exchange; Mbari Art, Washington DC; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; Chisborough Product Industries, Lagos; former NAL Merchant Bank, and Alfa Romeo, Italy. Dale has participated in numerous

national and international exhibitions throughout his productive career. (Aworan'ka, n.d).

SAFE JOURNEY

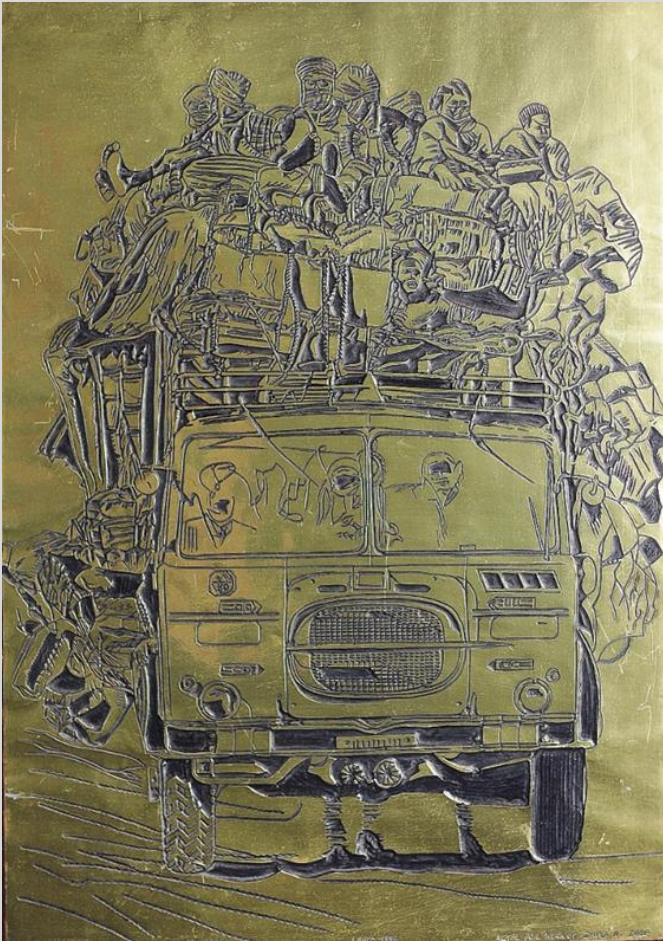


Fig. 1 Safe Journey, David Dale, metal foil, 1997, 100 x 47 cm, ©Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art.

David Dale's metal foil piece, *Safe Journey*, captures a lorry overloaded with people and their baggage on both sides of the vehicle. The dark lines etched onto the metal foil depict a lorry moving from one part of Nigeria, most likely the Northern part, to other parts of the country. The lorry is a cargo lorry but it is loaded with people. This is evident in the flowing attires and turbans worn by the human figures on top of the vehicle. The gender of the people being conveyed by the vehicle is not identifiable from looking at the piece.

The properties on the vehicle might be personal belongings or agricultural products for trade like bags of yam tubers, tomatoes, pepper, onions, and other items grown in the Northern part of Nigeria.

The title of the piece "*Safe Journey*" is a wish of safety to people who are embarking on a journey. This title is ironic, given the hazardous way in which the people and goods are seen in the lorry.

David Dale most likely made this piece as a satire of the transport system in Nigeria, showing how travelers endanger their lives by overloading their vehicles despite the bad nature of the roads which is depicted by the uneven crooked etches underneath the vehicle.

METAL FOIL

Dale's etching method despite being Onobrakpeya's student was unique in technique and subject. His metal foil forms were very different from Onobrakpeya's as a result of his love for naturalistic images. Onobrakpeya preferred abstract and mythological imageries which had a strong connection to his cultural roots. He was versatile in his use of metal foil methods. Dale, on the other hand, presented his illustrations below the flat surface of the plate. Rather than using a relief elevation, he etches his illustrations deeply into the gold-plated metal foil and runs printing ink over the etched surface to send the ink into the illustrated depressions in the metal foil. Every excess ink is wiped off the surface of the metal foil.

Bruce Onobrakpeya and other Nigerian artists like Alawode Azeez, Peju Layiwola, Ojo Olaniyi, Tony Enebeli, Alao Luqman, Asibu Oluwatunde, Yusuf Seidu Okuns, and Johnson Sobowale have explored plastography, metal foil deep etching, metal foil relief print, and other metal foil techniques that revolve around engraving images on metal sheets.

CONCLUSION

David Dale's "*Safe Journey*" is an indication that the artist is very conscious of the social decadence in his

society which he expresses using his artwork. His outstanding material versatility makes his art forms stand out as he presents different social issues in his work.

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