

# **The Influence of the Bantoue Philosophy on African American Contemporary Mural Painting**

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## **Abstract:**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, modern trends appeared in plastic art; As a result of the discovery of African art, which quickly dominated the styles of European artists due to its originality and connection with human traditions and wisdom, it was a source of inspiration for most modern art schools such as symbolism, brutality, and cubism. Picasso and Braque were influenced in some of their works by Negro art. In formations and treatments, and in that period also American mural painting began to exist at the hands of African-American artists who have African origins as a result of the immigration of their ancestors to America in the seventeenth century; Consequently, these artists were influenced by some ancient philosophies that contributed to the creation of many rules that the artist follows in the process of artistic creativity and made his works linked to place and creed, and among these philosophies (African Bantu philosophy); Which implies that the ancient African artists distinguish between what the senses perceive and what is.

The essence of the self and its inner essence - for it has a mystical contemplative concept - by which they distinguish between the body, shadow and soul on the one hand, and the person's self or essence on the other hand. From this thought, the African-American artist set out to express his identity, using the symbol in many of his murals to express himself, his origin, and his pride in the artistic past of his ancestors. (And the artist (John Biggers), who made many trips to Africa to learn more about African life, art and the ancient Bantu philosophy - that philosophy - which was the fruit of human talents since ancient times .

## **Key words :**

( The Bantoue Philosophy – African Existentialism – mural painting- African American – Contemporary ).

## **Introduction:**

What distinguishes art from all other human activities is that it transcends the mere depiction of reality with its minimal idealism, so it transcends it on its daily and familiar scale. Complete realism is a kind of myth, so if we want complete realism, the artist must be deleted and any distance separating art from reality must be abolished, and thus the acceptance of the end of art. Art aims to conquer all oppression, all that is negative, and all that degrades man.. Art is a kind of transcendence; Transcend the sick reality to what is better, as the life and contemporary life that man lives in is full of all forms of ugliness.. In it, man is lost and has become a mere thing, due to the loss of the meanings and values of beauty.. And when a person loses a sense of beauty, he loses the humanity within him.

Likewise, the relationship between art and philosophy is a close relationship, just as the history of philosophy is linked to the development or historical sequence of society, so art also comes influenced by these same factors, in addition to the fact that many works of art bear the artistic character mixed with philosophical thought, especially photography in the existential direction, so the existentialism of photography is Creativity from an inner vision, that is, in terms of the relationship of existence, whether it is comprehensive existence or human existence. The pictorial vision here is a vision of existence with things, not a partial or total vision of reality. His cognitive ability as well as his intuition allow him to see the reality of the world. At the beginning of the twentieth century, modern trends appeared in plastic art. As a result of the discovery of African art, which quickly dominated the styles of European artists because of its originality and connection with human traditions and wisdom, it was a source of inspiration for most modern art schools such as symbolism, brutality, cubism and others, and in that period also American murals began to be present on The hands of African-American artists, who have African roots as a result of the immigration of their ancestors to America in the seventeenth century; Consequently, these artists were influenced by some ancient philosophies that contributed to devising many of the rules that the artist follows in the process of artistic creation and made his works linked to place and belief, and among these philosophies (the African Bantu philosophy); Which says in the language of metaphor, "There is something else in everything," or "There is something else in every human being." We should understand from that that they – that is, the Africans – distinguish between what the senses perceive and what is the essence of the self and its inner essence, and we distinguish in man between body and soul." They have a mystical contemplative concept by which they distinguish between the body, shadow, and soul on the one hand, and the person's essence or essence on the other hand. From this thought, the African-American artist started expressing his identity, using the symbol in many of his wall paintings to express himself, his origin, and his pride in the artistic past of his ancestors, and he drew inspiration from symbols and myths in his works from the ancient Bantian philosophy, and among these artists is the artist "Aron Douglas - Aron Douglas" (\* ) and the artist "John Biggers" (\*\*); They made many trips to Africa to learn more about African life, art and Bantu philosophy - that philosophy - which was the fruit of human talents since ancient times.

### **Research Problem:**

The research problem is related to the study of the ancient African Bantu philosophy and its impact on the work of African-American mural artists, by shedding light on the most important features of this philosophy and presenting some of the works of two of the most important African-American artists; To raise several questions, the most important of which are:

- A. Has the African-American artist succeeded in getting rid of European dependence in plastic art, after most of the artworks of Negroes in America were mere reproductions of the methods and treatments of European classical art?
- B. Is it possible for the African-American artist to make his works more modern and contemporary despite his return to his identity and roots and his resort to discovering and studying ancient philosophies and his attempt to benefit from them in his artistic work?

**Research Aims:**

- a. Shedding light on an ancient African philosophy that shaped many beliefs, namely the Bantu philosophy, which greatly influenced many of the works of African-American mural artists.
- B. Researching the rules and concepts on which this philosophy arose and contributed to the process of artistic creativity and made the works of the African-American artist linked to place and belief.
- c. Displaying examples of mural works by two African-American artists who were greatly influenced by the ideas and beliefs of their ancestors and ancient ancestors in Africa.

**Research Importance:**

- a. The research contributes to shedding light on an ancient philosophy that has not been studied or talked about very little, although most of the peoples of Africa belong to it, and it is the "Bantu dynasty".
- B. Studying many works of African-American mural painting and reaching the identity of these works, and the extent to which they express the issues of negroes and racism that they were directing in America.
- c. The research presents a study of some artistic models that refer to the Negro artist's discovery of himself, his origins, and the history of his ancestors.

**Research Hypotheses:**

- a. The African-American artist succeeded in getting rid of European dependence in plastic art, after most of the artworks of the Negroes in America were merely reproductions of the methods and treatments of European classical art.
- B. The African American artist can make his work more modern and contemporary despite his return to his identity and roots and his resort to discovering and studying ancient philosophies and his attempt to benefit from them in his artistic work.

**Research Results:**

- a. It became clear through the previous study the great importance of the African Bantu philosophy in the completion of the creative process that began in modern European painting and then moved to the art of contemporary African-American mural painting, through research in the basic principles upon which this philosophy was based, and affected the conscience and beliefs of African-American artists. This led to their production of works of art related to the place and faith of the African continent.
- B. Learn about the rules and laws through which Bantu wisdom and philosophy arose, and the extent of their influence on contemporary African-American mural works, and their contribution to the creation and creativity of artistic paintings with different configurations based on shadow and symbol, which calls for departing from the natural framework and looking at the meanings behind the surrounding things and not caring With its outward appearance, it is obvious to anyone.
- c. Most African-American artists were clearly influenced in their work by ancient Egyptian mural painting. This is especially in drawing people, hair drawing treatments, sitting positions, and shoulder drawing, and this indicates the extent to which the Bantu philosophy, as a philosophy based largely on religious beliefs, is related to the ancient Egyptian religion. When

we delve into the study and analysis of the Bantu wisdom, we may find a key and a solution to many questions about matters Mysterious in the ancient Egyptian faith.

### Recommendations:

a. This study shows the lack of Arabic and foreign references and scientific books that are concerned with studying the influence of the Bantu philosophy on plastic art in general, and contemporary African-American mural painting in particular. Which defines ancient African philosophies in general, because of its influence on the work of most of the artists of the African continent.

B. Benefiting from the artistic features and rules that the research touched upon in the study of the artists' mural works, in producing contemporary mural works with various areas and color treatments dominated by abstraction and the use of shadows in different forms and ideas, and trying to use some elements and various materials in their implementation, inside and outside the various bodies, institutions and places.

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