

El anatsui inspired artwork essay



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Is known for his artwork utilizing recycled materials to create a contemporary piece that speaks to African historical traditions and art practices. One common material found in the artwork is aluminum labels of local Nigerian alcohol brands including whiskey, rum, brandy, vodka and others. The labels are then weaved together by copper wires to create a large cloth of aluminum. Mutants used his medium to show the significance of the relationship between Europe and Africa.

It correlates the earliest contact between the two wherein alcoholic beverages were introduced to Africans as trade items. The artworks emphasize the phrase "one man's trash is another man's treasure." The materials are usually known as impermanent yet in this bicycling artwork they are more sustainable. The used materials show that alcohol is a temporary and "for-now" substance; the materials used in my own piece, parts of different electronics, show the same idea that genealogy is always changing never stagnant as Antis similarly says that is how life works.

El Antis explains in an interview that life is not a fixed phenomenon. It is transformable and malleable like the metal of his art pieces; the cloth is able to be bended and molded at the artist's command as what he calls "indeterminate forms." This idea similar to my own version and interpretation in that technology in modern times is constantly changing and improving the same way that the cloth can be changed. Antis sees his artwork as linking the two histories of Europe and Africa together.

The initial contact of Europeans and Africans through trade is where alcohol is introduced. This contact created a relationship between cultures. In the

same way, the mirror in my own piece creates a relationship between the subject and the viewer, unnatural versus organic. As seen, the artworks of El Antis present a variety of themes for the viewer to interpret. His work speaks in a way that compliments historical African artwork yet stands out as a modern interpretation.