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**Tingatinga**

Tingatinga is a painting style that originated in Tanzania and derived its name from Edward Saidi (E.S.) Tingatinga. E.S. Tingatinga only actively painted from 1968-1972; he died in an accidental police shooting in 1972. His legacy has been handed down through the Tingatinga Arts Cooperative Society. There is a shift in the style from the first generation—E.S. Tingatinga and those he trained personally—to the second generation, those trained by E.S. Tingatinga’s students. Tingatinga paintings are typified by bright, highly saturated hues, shallow compositions, flattened forms, and highly decorated surfaces. Animals are the most common theme of the style. The surfaces of animals are often transformed into undulating lines, series of dots, or concentric circles and teardrops. Scenes depicting village or city life are other popular themes, often with a moralizing element cautioning against departing from a generalized ‘traditional’ life. There are an estimated 300-500 artists painting in the Tingatinga style. Tingatinga paintings have received international recognition; museums in Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and Japan have created exhibits from both generations of painters.

E.S. Tingatinga’s paintings developed as a means of making money from the Tanzanian tourist industry, and as such focused on the large animals typically found on safari: lion, elephant, leopard, cape buffalo, giraffe, hippopotamus, ostrich, rhinocerous, and zebra. Occasionally, small animals were included, specifically guinea fowl and other birds. In order to maximize profits, Tingatinga used Masonite boards and bicycle enamel paint as his materials; he cut the boards in half, resulting in a perfect square (60x60 cm). This led some scholars and museums to label Tingatinga paintings as Tanzanian Square Paintings.

In order to keep up with production, E.S Tingatinga trained a few interested relatives and friends to help with preparing the boards while he worked his day job as a ward attendant at Muhimbili Hospital. These individuals gradually began copying E.S. Tingatinga’s compositions, as well as creating their own. Following Tingatinga’s death in 1972, Simon Mpata, Januari Linda, Adeusi Mandu, Kaspar Hendrick Tedo, Abdalla Ajaba, Omary Abdallah Amonde, and Hashimu Bushiri Mruta formed the Tingatinga Arts Cooperative Society. Located behind the Morogoro stores on Oyster Bay, outside of Dar es Salaam, the Cooperative Society is close to where E.S. Tingatinga held his own workshop in Msasani.

The second generation Tingatinga artists share many qualities with the first generation that trained them. Most tend to come from rural Tanzania, specifically the southern region near the Mozambique border; to be of Makua descent like E.S. Tingatinga; and to have limited formal education. Second generation Tingatinga artists shifted the style to include swirling compositions, more landscape elements, an increased focus on birds, and canvas rather than Masonite boards. This last shift has also liberated the composition from the 60x60 cm stricture to any size that the artist desires.

**References and Further Reading**

Goscinny, Y. (2003) *Tingatinga : the popular paintings from Tanzania.* Dar es Salaam: La Petite Galerie.

Schaedler, K-F. (1998) *The Tingatinga School: Tanzanian Square Painters from the Rosenfeld Collection.* Munich: Panterra Verlag.

Thorup, T, Sam, C. (2011) *Tingatinga: Kitsch or Quality: Bicycle Enamel on Board & Canvas.* 2nd ed. Copenhagen: Thorup Art.



http://www.tingatingastudio.com/tinga-tinga-simple.html#Mangula

Birds in a Tree by Mangula Ramadhani

Enamel on canvas, 80x100 cm