Abstract
This dissertation examines Aesthetics from a Fine art perspective, using a theoretical framework that works in a chronological manner. Contemporary art includes a variety of approaches to aesthetics while adopting styles and movements that have existed since the 18th century and breaking new ground as time passes. This paper aimed to come to a coherent understanding of the various guidelines that are used to judge contemporary art.
What started off as an examination of aesthetics turned instead into a discourse over the various perceptions of art, categorized into four main themes or styles. These are Realism, Expressionism, Formalism and Postmodern Pluralism. An analysis of the seminal theories of these genres leads to an understanding of how different types of art decide within themselves as to what constitutes being good, or bad; i.e. their aesthetic valuation.
Apart from the knowledge I gained in actually discussing the work, many of the lessons were learnt in trying to connect two seemingly connected yet disparate fields. The dissertation itself and how I approached it, gave me a clearer understanding about the nature of aesthetics and they way it relates to art. The decision to divide art into subdivisions came as a result of realizing that art is essentially too diverse in nature to be grouped into one category. Therefore, I looked towards finding similarities and ended up with the idea that all art could be categorized into four main points of view. These are often contradictory and any argument for one aspect of judgment or criteria alone is a paradox. As soon as you start examining the social constructs and the historical context of a work of art, contemporary ideas start to demonstrate how these ideas are meaningless.
I did end up with an understanding on how aesthetics could be viewed from four distinct points of view that make up the major way they are perceived. These judgments are interchangeable and one artwork can be judged using other criteria to decide whether or not they have been successful. In conclusion, the importance of aesthetics is therefore inherent in the artwork, the art process, and the ideas the work generates. Also, the existence of both subjectivity and objectivity within art as a way to judge art and to realize that there they are both sides of the same coin was the conclusion I arrived at.