Abstract
No man exists separate from his surroundings and in order to understand himself a
person needs to study the world around him, its past as well as its present. The study of
the past enables him to make logical decisions and to avoid the repetition of mistakes.
Since history is so important, it is therefore vital to identify the factors which may affect
it’s accuracy. Visual art has proven to be a successful form of communication and has
been used frequently to record historical events. The aim of this dissertation is to identify
visual art as a source of history and to analyze its role in the manipulation of data. It
focuses on the research question of how paintings are used as sources of history and what
factors influence the accuracy of the data represented.
In order to reach a conclusion, paintings from different eras and genres have been
studied with respect to their historical context. Arguments highlighted by experts in the
field have been considered and used to support the thesis. Through the analysis it was highlighted that several factors affect the accuracy of historical data in paintings. Apart from the distortion which occurs during the translation
of a four-dimensional subject on to a two-dimensional surface, other factors assisting in
the manipulation of facts include biases of the artists, political agendas, demands of
patrons, poor choice of reference material and mistakes made during the compilation of