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Art and Design Practices in Nigeria: The Problem of Dropping Out

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Abstract

This article concerns artistic development within the context of a Master of Fine Arts program in visual arts in Sweden, and presents an empirical study based on repeated interviews with a group of art students. The aim is to contribute to our present understanding of artistic development by focusing on changes in the relation between the student and his/her artistic work as part of their artistic development. The study describes and analyzes the character of these changes, within the theoretical frame of phenomenographic research on learning. The notion of 'resting assured' is used to describe the main characteristic of the qualitative change found in the relation between the student and his/her artistic work. To 'rest assured' refers to a state of trust in their own ability that the students develop. Findings are discussed from an educational theoretical perspective, emphasizing the connection between self-direction and resting assured.

Introduction

The practice of art and design in Nigeria is almost a general endeavour, and an attempt by service providers to satisfy the curious consumers who daily yearn for creative works. In the beginning, the practice of art was restricted to the courts of kings, and particularly among the Yoruba culture of the southwest. Artists were admonished almost religiously as super craftsmen who could decorate the Kingdom. The practice of art went beyond embellishment of artifacts. Art was a type of practice that required patience for the service of humanity. In other words, many artists who did not receive formal training still found their relevance whenever beautification matters arose. Trained artists were specifically specialists in major areas of art and design. These vast areas provided opportunities for the explorations and experimentations of new media and materials. A brief historical review of the state of art and design in Nigeria provides a question as to why individually trained designers and artists find it difficult to remain in practice.

History

In Nigerian traditional societies, art and craft played a major role in all facets of life. Art was really a synthesis of cultural formation and also an encouragement of the creative spark in individuals. In architecture, textiles, ceramics, painting, graphics, and so forth, the traditional artist/designer met the needs of the community as is true in many cultures of the world. In this context, artists worked to meet the needs of the society as professionals. The arrival of the missionaries sought and imposed alien Christian ways of life on the indigenous African people (Akolo, 1985). We believe that the missionaries succeeded in divorcing art from socio-political and economic development in Nigeria.

In pre-colonial times, the entire art and cultural practice flourished for centuries. Records of works of the Benin bronze castings, the Ife bronze figures, the Esie stone carvings, the Bida brass making (all in Nigeria) and the weaving and dyeing activities that span the pre-colonial era, were supported by kings and the traditional society. Regenerations and reproductions of the art pieces were manifested through the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system in this period was associated with values and norms that assisted to foster good relationships between the master-craftsman and the learners. The apprentices became masters after they had learned the ‘basic principles’ of the craft and had graduated to working independently. This was how generations of Nigerian artists and craftsmen survived until today.

The colonial period in Nigeria witnessed the arrival of the Christian missionaries which brought about a tremendous decline in art activities and production. The philosophy of the Christian faith seemed to have instigated the belief that art making was associated

with idol worshipping. Traditionalists believed that the images created to worship some deities and gods assisted the society in precarious times. We are not implying that the concept of colonialism and missionary activities were identical; however, the common point between the two was that the colonial masters intended to indoctrinate the larger masses of people available in church congregations for expansionist purposes. Various methods were used to achieve this aim. For instance, after the Nigerian independence in 1960, remnants of the art practices and studio workshops were partially encouraged by some select missionaries. One example includes the activities of Father Kevin Carroll of Oye Ekiti Catholic Church (Nigeria), who assisted artists and craftsmen to use traditional images to convey Christian religious activities (Ojo, 1990).

The emergence of art schools translating visual art varieties began to manifest during post colonial times. The 1960 Nigerian Independence also encouraged Nigerians to embrace western education which helped to foster art education. Solomon Irein Wangboje, a Benin (Nigerian) artist and scholar, brought innovations into the teaching of art in schools. Dan Omobuvde, also a Nigerian artist, blended his English experiences with art teaching (Ojo, 2000). Together with the activities of the expatriate teachers already available in Nigeria before 1960, the teaching and learning of art became reinvigorated with new art forms and concepts. Many artists were thus trained in public secondary schools, colleges and universities.

As time went on, art, which had hitherto been a way of conveying religious and philosophical values as well as performing utilitarian roles, was jettisoned and disregarded. Individual creative abilities were repressed through backward educational policies put in place in which parents regarded art as an occupation belonging to the dullards. Consequently, the various stages of creative artistic development of the individual from childhood through formative stages in art making was directly or indirectly hindered by the discouraging societal and governmental attitude. In Nigeria the study of art and design were disparaged while science based courses were encouraged. For example governments at various levels engaged in constructions and renovations of science buildings, equipping them with laboratory chemicals and other technology based apparatus, leaving art and design infrastructures to deteriorate. The resultant effects have been that potential artists and designers could no longer visualize or relate art to various economic developments going on in their societies. With this and other factors, potential artist/designers often preferred to seek other professions.

A major concern of many Nigerian professionals (including scholars and educators) in the field of art and design has been that of placing art practice in its proper position. Various conferences have been held both at national and international levels to examine the factors that are responsible for the downward trends currently pervading the

profession. Three notable conferences have been: 1) the *International Conference on Professionalism in the Visual Arts in Nigeria* convened by the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) in 2004. At that conference, the Society of Nigerian Artists remarked that over 85% of Nigerian art and design artists in the country were engaged in other occupations for making a living (Egonwa, 2004); 2) the *Conference on Re-interrogating the Visual Arts Curriculum and Standards in Nigerian Universities and other Institutions*, organized in 2004, by the Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA) in conjunction with the “Art Republic”, in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria; 3) the *National Conference on Sustaining the Creative Traditions in Nigerian Art* was organized by the Culture and Creative Arts Forum (CCAF) in Lagos, Nigeria 2003, deliberated on the relevance of art practices of the past to the present. Community network groups emerging from these conferences have identified the causes for low interest in art as a course of professional study and the serious deterioration of art as a career path in Nigeria.

Art educators such as Adepegba, Majemite, Filani, Ola-Oloidi, Fatuyi, Ogunduyile, Anidugbe, and art collectors like Yemisi Shyllon, and Segun Mimiko agree that pains and challenges exist in the practice of art and design but wonder why trained artists and designers would want to abandon their professional callings when it is obvious that there are also gains attached to the practice. This paper shares similar views with these art leaders but looks more into the factors responsible for why trained individuals are changing fields entirely.

Generally, the Nigerian society frowns upon individuals who have dropped out of schools and regard such people as having lost the tremendous opportunities that schooling and education might provide. The term *dropout* means absconding from school without completing one’s education. *Dropout artists* is used in this paper as a term to identify artists and designers who do not practice studio art as a sole profession. This implies that the artist who takes up a job that is irrelevant to his training in the government ministry is likely to have dropped out of artistic practice faster than those who have picked up jobs in art related commercial establishments. The practice of art and design in Nigeria is still the exclusive preserve of art educators, advertising agencies, and other freelance professionals who engage in the making of tourist objects for foreigners and communities.

Reasons Why Nigerian Artists and Designers Drop Out of Practice

Artists and designers abandon professional practice due to personal, parental, societal and governmental factors. The drop out pattern is often connected to lack of an enabling environment for the practice of art and design in Nigeria. This is perhaps why artists and

designers venture into other professions that enjoy regular and higher wage support. A few reasons for dropping out have been identified so far. The first on the list is:

Lack of Support from Government and Institutions

Over the years, government and institutions in Nigeria have not been clearly seen to support art practices. For example, artists and designers who have found themselves in the corridors of power in Nigeria have insisted that government policy on estate development and construction of public buildings should encourage the use of art works in the form of sculptures, mural decorations, and other interior decorations. This aspect of construction policy was adopted in principle but abandoned for government collaboration with contractors who appeared to have absolute distaste for art works and who interpreted public art to mean additional financial responsibilities of contractual estimate agreements. By this single act, patronage for the artists was downplayed. A cultural policy for the encouragement of art and design was also formulated in the Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1999) in section 6.4 which states in sub-section 6.4.5 that: the state shall establish a National Gallery of Art whose objectives shall be:

- (a) to serve as repository for artistic creations and practices since the birth of the country as a nation,
- (b) to promote creative genius in Nigerian artists and designers, and
- (c) to promote research, art education and appreciation.

Unfortunately, some of these policies were never positively implemented to affect the lives of practicing artists.

Decline in Academic Enrolment

Within academia, there is a sharp decline in the enrolment of art and design students. This also translates to the lack of manpower to teach the various courses in fine and applied arts. In some Nigerian universities, where art and design are taught, enrolment of students in art and design related areas are generated by “co-opting” and “diverting” candidates who have applied to study biology, chemistry, estate management, agriculture courses, and so on, to study art. The reason for increased drop out rates could be that this diversion may not have been strong enough to make committed professionals of those whose interests were not originally in the art profession. Although some art educationists opine that artists can be made, the basic interest of candidates is developed in the elementary school and many candidates seeking admission into colleges and universities are forcefully co-opted to study art at the beginning of their school career. The consequence of this at graduation is the candidate’s lack of interest in the profession he was trained for, and thus the candidate drops out of the profession for his other life interest.

It is noteworthy to say that there are many opportunities in the profession of art, as there are diversities in art and design specializations such as graphics, textiles, traditional pottery, ceramics, printmaking, painting, and sculpture making. Other visual art-related fields in which practitioners could develop professionally are drama, film-making, music, interior decoration, and home economics. These many areas of the visual and applied arts have potential for creativity and many possibilities for global relevance and computer applications.

Political Support

The lack of political will on the part of government to implement the cultural policy put on paper, and the lack of commitment to art education by political leaders are serious factors in Nigeria. The marginalization of artists and art teachers in career progression and in payment of personal wages and emoluments in public services and private institutions, and the absence of consensus action to tackle problems affecting artists on the part of the art groups have not encouraged the practice of art in Nigeria and consequently increased dropout rates.

Freelance artists and artists in public service receive no encouragement from governments. Patronage, loans, and welfare packages enjoyed by other professionals such as doctors, architects, engineers, and builders in Nigeria are not within the reach of artists because of their inability to provide collaterals for the loans. In the cities of Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Abuja, artists find it difficult to pay for exorbitant rents and maintain studios. Art galleries and trade shows are exclusively managed by wealthy collectors who are themselves untrained artists, and who in turn exploit artists on a large scale by undervaluing their works for sale (Ojo, 2004a). The situation is worse in the rural areas. Artist who hitherto enjoyed the patronage arising from the cultural value system are gradually being neglected for producing objects and pictures that can promote idol worship. The reason for this is not far fetched with the rapidly expanding Christian faith. Major streets in Nigerian cities and villages generally have no less than two churches with large congregations. Some sculptural objects are considered as fetishes and carvers of such objects are chastised and openly intimidated by church worship songs and sermons.

Inadequate Career Guidance

Another factor among the list is counseling problems. Counseling is foundational and fundamental to any choice to be made or any step to be taken. Before anyone can be considered a dropout in a school he/she must have enrolled and later renounced schooling. So it is in careers such as art and design; the individual must have received professional training (or still receiving training) before quitting. It is not unlikely that he/she entered into it wrongly, or that there was frustration along the line which might

have led to lack of continuous interest. Guidance and counseling are very necessary before the choice of a career so as to be aware of what it takes to live an artist's life. Career counseling at the primary and secondary school levels could assist in making career discoveries that may benefit youths to choose an art career path that would enable Nigerian society to acquire a creative cultural workforce. This would support the growth of dedicated individuals in the economic growth of the nation.

Anidugbe (2003) suggests that modern artists and emerging art professionals in Nigeria should be properly counseled to consider a number of issues crucial in their practice. One of them is experimentation and the courage to incorporate new ideas. Another is to possibly attain post-graduation training to enable work with new media and modern technology using local contents. Contrary to this, new entrants do not have sufficient aptitude and interest which would serve as a springboard and prerequisite for entering into and remaining in the art profession. Awareness of the prospects and challenges of the profession is as important as the profession itself. Artists and designers can be made but the truth is that proper counseling before taking up a specialization is necessary to expose possible candidates to the nitty-gritty, prospects and challenges, as well as what it takes to start, cope, and prosper in the profession. Experience has shown that sufficient aptitude, interest, and adequate funding are important factors to be clearly understood and considered.

Loosing Hope of a Viable Living

The economic gains in the practice of art do not seem to come by just as any other profession. The artist patiently completes his work in the studio, organizes exhibitions and waits on patrons and buyers. The lack of adequate patronage for art and design products constantly dashes the hopes and aspirations of artists. The frustration which arises as a result of low patronage and sales of art works seem to have been a sufficient factor for the lack of perseverance on the part of professionals who drop out of practice as soon as their targets are not met. For example, some financial benefits are expected after exhibitions, yet many exhibitions may not have attracted good patronage and thus few artworks are sold. Practicing artists seem to depend on patronage which only comes by sometimes luck and the ability to influence patrons.

Wrong Priorities and Notions

Most youths are usually misguided to make up their priorities. The notion that the quickest and easiest way to make money is to push one's profession to one side and participate in active politics seems to be a wrong induction. Politics in Nigeria seem to be bedeviled by lavish lifestyles encouraged by huge capital votes released monthly by the federal government to politicians as wages and allowances. This splendor encourages youths in Nigeria to abandon their professional callings and identify themselves with

political parties that can elevate them to elective posts where money will come by easily. There are records of trained artists who deviated to other professions which they thought would provide greater income than when in art practice. The record of rates of drop-out artists can be streamlined by standardization of formation and implementation of educational planning that will admonish cultural orientation in curricula and school syllabi. The use of art to create a focused cultural value system and the engagement of art in providing simulation for the reproduction in the industry is envisaged by this re-orientation. The 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria should also be re-designed to foster the essentials of crafts in the service of mankind. This Nigerian system of education is a complete schooling system which is segmented into the first six years for the primary school education of the child. The next three years is for the Junior Secondary education and the second three years is meant to be spent in the Senior Secondary School. The last four years is meant to be spent to acquire tertiary education. The 4-year tertiary school system should consolidate the training by providing specialist education to all the branches of art.

Socioeconomic Imperatives

Patronage of art and design in Nigeria is the combination of these factors: quality of work, patronage pattern, popularity, and connection. A studio artist's exhibitions, if poorly patronized could generate low income and lead to both economic and emotional frustration. The awareness of Nigerians in the patronage of art is seemingly inadequate. Artists or designers who could press the right connection with the political class and business tycoons are expected to have enough proceeds to continue in the profession. As a matter of fact, patronage in Nigeria is not based on an artist's new ideas or inventions. It is basically influenced by the political class and how the artist/designer is able to express romance with the political class who can afford to buy his work. The situation is increasingly becoming worse by the day. The inability of the patrons to honour their pledges and the beggarly attitudes of the artists constitute a frustrating development in art patronage. Many Nigerian art patrons compel artists to pay several visits to their homes and offices before they pay for artworks they bought at exhibitions. Since the artists need the money to survive, they 'obey' all repeated messages to call again. In the old days, artists stayed in one place where the patrons would visit. Many artists in Nigeria today solicit for patronage outside exhibitions. They move from one gallery to the other asking to sell their works at any cost. This is why customers dictate what they will pay for creative art or design. The artist or designer is at liberty to accept or reject. Also, there are many artists who undertake any art or design work at ridiculous bargaining. The strong point is that the artist needs to survive.

Lack of Take-off Capital

The skill to practice art has not been a major problem of most creative artists and designers but the problem is a lack of capital. Undoubtedly, getting into full time private practice in Nigeria is capital intensive; it involves putting in place a space as studio or workshop, materials, accessorial facilities, and equipment. Despite having these necessary items, there is the need for an initial working capital that will take care of the day-to-day running of the studio and other miscellaneous spending. Many of the artists and designers who want to set up their private studios cannot do so because of the high cost involved particularly since finances still remain the backbone and livewire of every business. To help the situation, suggestions on methods of raising capital for professional private practice in Nigeria have been given in Kayode, 2004. The methods are acquisition of loans from the appropriate financial institutions such as soliciting for support from government institutions such as the Accelerated Poverty Alleviation Agency (APAA) initiated by President Olusegun Obasanjo's civilian regime. The APAA was specially created by the government to assist artisans and job seekers to obtain minimum loans. Other sources include the leasing of family inheritance of land and other properties. Personal effects and family inheritances as well as landed properties can be sold among the Yorubas of the southwestern Nigeria to start a business or sponsor children in schools. This is not a strange practice in Nigeria as a whole. For instance, parents who cherish and value education (formal and informal) as the best legacy they could bequeath to their children and kinsmen can afford to fall back on this option as a last resort.

What is professional practice?

As stated by Swindells, Atkinson, and Sibley (2001):

The issue of professionalism is pertinent – it is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of a modern nation without relying upon the characteristics of professional behavior as indispensable to society as we know it and want it to be. Indeed, our developing technological world can only maintain its fundamental character by enlarging the scope of what we consider to be professional behaviour. In this context, we understand the professional as someone who applies their knowledge to their vocation with rigour and probity, usually within a professionally oriented community. (p. 130)

Professions differ significantly. The tenets of practice, conduct, ethics, ideology, membership constitutions, and acceptable qualifications are factors that make the variations and differences. According to Onyekezini (2004) professionalism has to do with belonging to a body of practitioners of a given field whose conduct or practice is governed by a set of standards, ethics, and codes. In Nigeria, there are professions like medicine, accounting, engineering, law, teaching, and of course, the art profession to mention but a few. The lawful and consistent pursuit of one's duties in these careers is

referred to as ‘professional practice’. It matters significantly as it is practically impossible to conceive a socio-economically viable community without reckoning on the economic contributions of people who are into the practice of their vocation or trade. Patriots in our societies distinguish themselves by the different contributions to their professional callings. The national advocacy for vocational and technical education in Nigeria is relevant to the position of this paper for the reason that it is partly geared towards providing an expanse for poverty alleviation and to pave the way for economic self-reliance and welfare of citizenry.

Recently, the accelerated poverty alleviation efforts of the federal and the various state governments to lend money to professional groups, individual practitioners, and the unemployed to start small and medium scale enterprises are of good intention. It is a new development borne out of the political manifestoes and promises of the present ruling political party, People’s Democratic Party (PDP), to encourage citizens to package their skills usefully. It is noteworthy to say again that many professionals in the country have not only abandoned their original trade for other things but the kind gestures of the government have also been made to flop in spite of the much publicity that seems to attract young artisans. Though politicians and party members are designated to distribute the loans, there is an ongoing problem with party members and loyalists demanding gratifications from practitioners. This caused them not to repay the loans when due. There is also evidence in Nigeria of how those who are trained in various professions, including teachers, abandoned their callings (sometimes for a while and other times perpetually) for full time politicking. Some of the Nigerian politicians who are prominent personalities were once university lecturers who may also wish to go back to the classroom after their tenures expire. It is therefore not surprising that professionals and servicemen are found among the Nigerian politicians. The truth of the matter is that the running of affairs of a developing country like Nigeria should seek the experiences of seasoned administrators and career officers who have no partial intentions of distributing public amenities unlike party members.

Professional practice is thus seen as a full time occupational calling in an organized work setting in which one is proficient and earning a living. Observations and enquiries into professional sites and studios have therefore revealed that professional practice is based on the application of acquired technical know-how and experiences on the job.

Professional practice in Art, Craft and Design in Nigeria

Art and design practice are diverse activities which constantly attract debate as to the nature of their discipline and the role of the artist/designer (Swindells et al., 2001). Julier (2001) notes that despite successive governments’ attempts to make art and design

education more in line with the needs of industry, its hugely different enrolment, teaching, and assessment practices compared to other academic disciplines conspire to produce a working practice which assumes the status of a lifestyle.

Practising art, craft, and design could suffice to becoming a profitable occupation in Nigeria if supported by some measure of patronage. Three categories of practitioners exist within the circle of the visual art industry in Nigeria. The first being those who engage in full time practice. Full time designers and artists can be academic or non-academic. Either of them need be well organized or be situated in offices. This does not matter as the substance patronage pattern and propaganda of the individual will assist to sell name and work. Apart from mass producing works for sale through galleries, craft shops, trade fairs, and other retail outlets at minimal rate, a professional artist, designer, or those working as craftsperson may sometimes have the opportunity of working on commission. This, according to Lowry (1997), means being asked to create a new piece of work for a specific client who may be an individual or organization that is fully committed to professional practice. The artist is established and organized to work for himself and produces volume of works (which could be prints, paintings, garments and fashion wares, pottery, glassware, leatherworks, jewelries, or sculptures) to be exhibited and sold to buyers. Buyers constitute the art patrons, private individuals, government and organizations like financial institutions, oil companies and agencies, as well as expatriate-collectors who acquire designs and art works either for sales or for utilitarian purposes. A full time professional artist/designer goes into a full time private professional practice with the intention to survive and live a fulfilled life under the employment of no one.

The second category of art practitioners are those who are not self-employed but are working in art or design related employment. They are trained practitioners in their chosen fields of fine and applied arts and are engaged by organizations that rate them according to their skills or academic qualifications. This, by implication means that only those who have read or specialized in graphic design-related disciplines would be relevant in advertising, printing, and publishing or the television industry. Graduates who specialize in textiles could be engaged in textile, fashion, and garment industries like Afprint, Bohjson, Seven Stars Industries, or Aswani Textiles (all located in Nigeria), while painters, and ceramic designers as well as other art specialists would find work in places where they are professionally relevant.

The third category represents those working in the academic institutions (primary, secondary, and tertiary schools), and teaching the visual arts to students. In Nigeria today, holders of Teachers Grade II Certificate (TC II) are no longer employed to teach in the primary school system while those already in the system have been mandated to enroll for academic certificate programmes higher than the TC Grade II. The minimum teaching

qualification for primary school art teaching is the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). There are however, holders of university degrees in the primary school teaching service as well.

The primary education runs for six years. Art is a synthesis of dance, drama and creative art, which are compulsory at this level. The secondary school setting consists of two levels, as programmed for the Nigerian 6-3-3-4 system of education; these are the junior and senior secondary schools (Omolewa, 2002). Of the total number of pupils who enrolled for primary school education in 2002, an average of 81% graduated. Out of the 81% who graduated from the primary school only 34% enrolled at the secondary school level. It is compulsory to offer fine arts in the first three years of the secondary known as Junior Secondary School while it is not compulsory at the second tier known as the Senior Secondary. Out of the 34% from the secondary education level, 17% were enrolled for art at the senior secondary school level. There are about fifty universities in Nigeria. These comprise Federal, State, and Private institutions. About 7% enrolled into the art programme in tertiary institutions. Out of the many universities, Ogunduyile (1999) averred that only 12 offer courses in art and design. The total population of students finishing the art programme from these institutions was less than 0.6%

Minimum entry qualifications of teachers into the art teaching employment in Nigerian Junior Secondary Schools, as for now, remains the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) in Fine and Applied arts while either the Higher National Diploma (HND) or a university degree in the same discipline is required of those who intend to teach in the Senior Secondary School. All colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities are grouped into tertiary institutions in Nigeria where instructors, technologists, and lecturers in the visual art fields are employed as personnel. The art instructors and technologists are holders of the basic Higher National Diploma Certificate while those designated as lecturers are staff with university degree(s) such as Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Art Education, Master and Doctorate degrees as the case may be.

Clarion call

The way to move the art profession forward must be clearly spelled out in practical terms. The art and design bodies in Nigeria have a big stake in this regard, and the professional bodies such as the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), the Nigerian Society of Education through Art (NSEA), the Osogbo Group of Artists, and the Association of African Industrial Designers (AAID) to mention but a few, used to operate by their various constitutions and were recognized by their artistic activities. But today, those that can be regarded as functioning art and design associations in the country are the SNA, the Culture and Creative Art Forum (CCAF), and the Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA).

Members consist of contemporary academic artists inside and outside of the country with the common goal of perpetuating African culture through art, and propagating through practical exhibition, African art and culture, as equally superior. Essentially, the role of the professional art bodies is to identify talented artists from the grass roots and promote professionalism in art and design. The question then arises: Are these art associations addressing the problem of professionals dropping out of art and design practice through their set aims and goals? Swindells et al. (2001) opine that art and design professional associations have not attained a uniform approach in creative professional practice and education because the makeup of professional status for the artist or designer is driven by a variety of institutions and agencies with little or no correspondence, and operating at differing levels. Swindells et al.'s submission seems to be an exact revelation of the Nigerian experience.

It is a considered opinion that the present bane of the Nigerian art associations are locked up in the lack of leadership, followership, motivation, and inability to pressure governments to implement the contents of the National Institute of Architects' (NIA) recommendation to include artists and designers in public building beautifications and developments (Ojo, 2004b; Shyllon, 2004). Low patronage; non-enlargement of the scope of membership of the Society of Nigerian Artists, Pan African Circle of Artists, and Culture and Creative Art Forum to include the non-academic and the 'roadside' artists; as well as the inability to create enabling environments for the individual designer/artist to survive, are parts of the shortcomings. Recent findings also reveal that a lot of factors hinder the admission of artists into professional bodies. These include lack of uniform entry educational qualifications into the courses in Nigerian tertiary institutions due to disparities in programme curricula. More importantly, there seems to be no professional body apart from the so-called Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) which moderates and oversees the practice and education of graphic design and advertising. This body supervises and certifies the education and professional practice of art and design as do their counterpart in professions like engineering, law, medicine and accountancy to mention but a few.

Recommendations

To redeem these anomalies, the art associations in the country should be committed to encouraging professional qualification of both old and new members. The associations should make efforts to be upgraded to professional bodies and seek proper accreditation from the Nigerian government to be able to register, regulate practice, and award professional qualifications. This practice may not be actualized unless and until the art groups in Nigeria organize themselves into sub-groups to resist patrons' arrogance and dictations through sensitization. There is nothing wrong when an organization seeks loans

from the government in sub-groups to foster trades and professions since the money for loans and advances belong to the nation. After all, artists and designers are bonafide members of the country. The associations should standardize and upgrade their credentials as well as develop proposals and strategies for the beautification of the country as a nation. When recognitions are gained, all other problems such as low patronage, empathy, and the drop out syndrome may be drastically minimized.

Job Prospects for Artists and Artist Dropouts

Visual artists who never practiced art and those who went into practice and later opted out could be regarded as “Art Dropouts.” The various art schools in Nigeria, academic and non-academic, have witnessed tremendous enrolment and graduation of students in the various areas of art; however, most of them, after completing and graduating as artists and designers seek jobs outside the field. Various studies have revealed that other professions are employing trained artists and designers as staff. Trained artists take up these jobs with the belief that white collar jobs muster attractive pay packages that are absent in art-related professions in the country. For example, there are many graduates of fine and applied arts who took up jobs in the Apapa Wharf Dock Yard in Lagos as passages and security officers. Some artists serve in active politics, while others are employed by commercial organizations or in financial institutions and later retrained as accountants either by circumstance or by self-volition.

It is still within the mainframe of the art profession however if a trained visual artist takes up a job in the advertising department of a financial institution or an oil company. He/she could also be employed in the training school of a manufacturing industry to oversee the package design of products or pick up a job as an illustrator of road graphic symbols in the haulage industry. These positions seem relevant, as they are still extensions of the service and could bring about integrity and continuity in art and design practice.

The Survey

For the purpose of this survey, a random sampling of trained artists and designers who later dropped out of practices for one reason or the other was carried out in Lagos and Kano, cities of Nigeria (Lagos and Kano are the largest cities where jobs opportunities are found). The six variables generated as bases of investigation in this paper were in questionnaire form as summarized below and were based on respondents’ opinions and reactions. Forty drop-out artists were interacted with, with a view to investigating reasons for dropping out of the profession after training. Twenty five representing 62.5% of the respondents were former colleagues and ex-students. Fifteen others representing 37.5% of the respondents were selected from graduates of other institutions. Simple percentages

based on the Likert scale were used for the summary of the respondents' reaction as stated in the table below:

Table 1: *Drop Outs' responses on factors that influence their exits from Art practices*

No.	Variables	No. of Respondents Scoring					Percentage of agreements	Ranking
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided		
1	Art Practices are jettisoned for lack of patronage and absence of strong financial backing	10	9	8	7	6	47%	4
2	Working in other sectors of the economy apart from art industry provides more income	25	12	2	0	1	92.5%	1
3	Art is not lucrative in the area of your practice	8	16	4	2	10	60%	3
4	There was no interest and zeal to train of become an artist at the onset	11	3	5	0	21	35%	5
5	Government's support for artist is inadequate. No enabling environment for the practice of art	27	10	1	2	0	92.5%	1
6	Artists' associations are not doing enough to encourage the practice of art in Nigeria	16	9	3	9	3	62.5%	2

Source: Authors' Field Work: March 2007 (Nigeria)

Discussion

A closer look at the summary of respondents reactions in the table presented shows that Variables 2 and 5 rank the highest with 92.5% each. This also implies that working as freelance artists, artist teachers, and artists in public service does not pay better than job engagements in other sectors of Nigerian economy such as financial institutions, oil companies and the like. Variable 4 on the table offers a record of respondents who did not intend to make art a career in the first place, but were later forcibly co-opted because they needed to attend a tertiary institution to get a certificate at all costs. Many of the surveyed, who did not find drop-out outlets at graduation, continued to adapt with possibilities of work which their specializations could provide. That is why the 35% agreement is recorded as not dramatic on the table. The result in Variable 5 suggests that the existing governments at local, state, and national levels do not create enabling environments for art and the artists. Art practice is not seen as lucrative like other notable businesses in Nigeria. This is also revealed in Variable 3 with the percentage of 60. It is to be noted however, that drop out artists are of the opinion that their living conditions are better while taking up another job other than art practices. Further interactions with the respondents in Variable 6 suggest that few artists' associations that exist in Nigeria actually harness resources to assist budding artists to establish the practice of art despite

the huge financial contributions made by practising members in various state chapters of the federation. The liaison office of the artists' association is also weak in connecting practicing artists with government patronage.

Famous practicing artists in Nigeria include Bruce Onobrakpeya, David Dale, Yusuf Grillo, Olakunle Filani, Tola Wewe to mention but a few. Other emerging practicing artists who have made their mark at the exhibition grounds in Nigeria are mostly new entrants. Art patronage in Nigeria is all about getting the right connections in business organizations or in the "corridor of power" (Ojo 2004b). While other great talents wallow in abject poverty because of lack of exposure and connections, artists with little zeal swim in affluence and wealth because patronage in the Nigerian art market is about knowing the right people (e.g. politicians, bureaucrats, directors, and key figures in various large organizations). Another insight from the survey conducted shows that as soon as the elected executive members of the artist associations in Nigeria assume office, they begin to violate the same associations' constitution that brought them to power. Consensus of opinions is no longer sought for making major decisions that affect members' welfare while the government's meager financial support for the association is mismanaged. There are no proper liaison facilities available for members, thereby widening the information gap between members and the executives. For example, the presence of an association such as the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) is no longer felt in art conferences, workshops, and symposia where communiqués that tend to improve the lots of artists/members' welfare are written and discussed. The federal and state governments and supporting institutions expected that the communiqués form conferences and forward recommendations and implementation suggestions.

The non-famous artist is thus perceived as the one who does not have the right connections to showcase and attract patrons for his works. Fame in art, as it is in the Nigeria context can be induced by politics and mere propaganda. Sympathy is given to non-famous but talented artists who possess no economic power and financial incentives. Educators and arts organizations are expected to influence Nigerian policy makers to find lasting solutions to this problem. This could be done when "protection for right of practice" is guaranteed by governments at various levels where stipends and beautification contracts are awarded only to registered artists.

The survey report shows that one major weakness of the artists' associations in Nigeria, and of course, the one that has directly affected the educational sector, is the inability to influence the restructure of primary and secondary school curricula policy at State and National levels. This implies that the low enrolment of art students recorded in primary, junior, and secondary schools was partially due to lack of participation in the proper counseling and education of the child by art practitioners. The association is expected to

play a major role by making radical inputs into the cultural and artistic curricula development of the child's education as he proceeds from one class to the other.

Specific Recommendations

The lack of interest to choose art as a career subject and to practise art when trained, can be curtailed when governments at State and Federal levels encourage ministries, parastatals and other public agencies to patronize art activities (The Nigerian Cultural Policy, as cited earlier in this paper is specific about government patronage of art). In January and March 2007, the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in conjunction with the federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and National Orientation in Nigeria were involved in 'Charting a new course for modern Nigerian Visual Arts' by organizing symposia and workshops that could attract stakeholders in art. This is a new course in the right direction which other art associations in Nigeria are expected to emulate.

To sensitize the populace and stimulate Nigerians on the prospect of art practices and cultural activities, government policy is expected to encourage the implementation of 'The Public Building Act' by compelling contractors of public buildings to engage the services of artists, designers, and decorators in the beautification and furnishing exercise. This is intended to increase artists' patronage and portray policy makers as partners in progress of expanding opportunities in the art and design industry. It is also expected that career counseling in the primary, junior, and senior secondary schools should be done by qualified personnel (including artists and designers). The artists' association is expected to request permanent membership, positions in various boards and panels that undertake the reviews of curricula, syllabi, and course synopsis so as to positively influence youth art training education. Factors to consider in the restructuring exercise will include the interpretation of Nigerian cultural history in arts education so it instills pride and knowledge about the country's past art making and contemporary development. The curriculum review panel in question should examine the development of indigenous crafts practices for the development of prototypes for the emerging industries as a proposed model for child self engagement and self reliance educational policy.

The professional arts associations in Nigeria are not doing enough in many areas as highlighted in the paper. Internal disputes among the executives and members, mismanagement of funds, and the widening information gap between members and executives are part of the internal problems that weaken the structures of the associations for effective performance.

A radical reform of the policies and practices of the arts associations therefore become necessary in view of the world outcry on the decline in patronage of art practices in Nigeria. Such reform should endeavour to standardize membership registrations for

professional practices. Standardization in this regard would mean setting goals and objectives required for criteria for membership certification for practice when handling beautification contracts for public buildings. Other creative exhibitions and shows mounted by artists may require the interaction of a jury before such shows are put up for national patronage. Exhibitions at the local level may be provided freely to artists whose interests still burn for public shows before appearing for national and international shows. The jury as a branch of government agencies duly recognized by the national government should be empowered financially to support artists' exhibitions and shows. This may tend to reduce the arrogance of private patrons.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to identify some causes and the seeming implications of artists and designers' attrition in Nigeria. Exemplary lives of great Nigerian artists such as Bruce Onobrakpeya, David Dale, Kolade Osinowo, Abayomi Berber, and a host of others should be emulated by budding artists and designers in Nigeria. The great Nigerian artists started their practice from scratch and set outstanding records by training, mentoring, and multiplying the number of artists in the country. A fundamental question is the consequences of the exit of great masters in Nigerian art practices. As great artists, designers, and craftsmen drop out of the profession for imagined greener pastures, it is envisaged that tough times are ahead in art practices in Nigeria. As suggested in this paper, the succour lies in the reform of artists and designers' societies such that can make them form formidable and legitimate forces to re-group to undertake public commissions and practice as freelancers in the widest creative environment created by political opportunities in Nigeria.

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