

Full Length Research

Sculpture Gardens: Panacea for Sustainable National Development

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This study tries to situate sculpture gardens as important phenomena in the history and development of modern societies, including visual arts. The study, therefore, posits that sculpture gardens are arenas where sculpture pieces of different dimensions and materials are assembled in a garden setting for the purposes of aesthetic pleasure, therapeutic, educational and preservation functions and others. Different studies have been carried out on sculpture, painting, graphics, and other areas of visual art, however, there is no significant study on the subject matter, hence the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collation are used to achieve the objectives of the study including participant observation method (POM). The scope is limited to Southeastern Nigeria. Some of the findings include that sculpture gardens are not popular in this part of the country, hence it's total negligence. Again, sculpture gardens promote knowledge, skills, creativity and inspire technological breakthrough. These were followed by conclusion and possible recommendations for futuristic focus.

Keywords: Sculpture Gardens, National Development

INTRODUCTION

Arts, social science, science, science and technology are essential ingredients to sustainable human development. To this end, every organized society that aspires or inclined to development and growth tend to massively invest on the above human endeavours as life without them may be meaningless, parochial, insipid, derogatory and others that may be associated with retrogression and ineptitude.

However, these specialized areas of human endeavours add glamour and quality to effective human existence, nationally and globally. For the purposes of this research, the study focuses attention on sculpture garden which significantly, represents a huge and important aspect of visual arts and creativity. Without mincing words, visual arts represents those human activities which expressively, brings into existence something new and aesthetically pleasing. It

could also, be regarded as a sum total of human activities, experiences and interactions with one or different materials to arrive at a new creation, yet pleasing to the sight and emotion. Again, every human activity aimed at expression of feelings, ideas, emotions, new knowledge on a two or three dimensional surfaces, may be regarded as Fine and Applied Arts or Visual Arts.

Visual arts as a body of knowledge includes Sculpture, Painting, Graphics, Ceramics, Textile Designing, Photography and Architecture. For the purposes of clarity, Sculpture takes the centre stage of the study. Therefore, sculpture may be considered a huge aspect of fine arts that deals with effective manipulation of soft pliable materials like clay, papier mache, plasticine, stone, wood, metals and metals of different substances and or dimensions like wires as

well as gauze wires, found objects and others to achieve a creation with aesthetic appeal. Any piece or pieces of art works achieved with any or combination of the above materials in relief or in the round could significantly be regarded as sculpture. One may be safe to conclude that sculpture is an important aspect of fine arts that is concerned with the creation of expressive form in three dimensions, including relief and free standing or sculpture in the round.

However, Jean-Luc (2010:553) shares the view that “sculpture offers the most objective evidence we have of man’s power over the world”. He therefore, describes sculpture as a three dimensional artwork created by shaping or combining hard materials, typically, stone, such as marble, metal, glass or wood. Softer materials (plastic) such as clay, textiles, plastics, polymers and softer metal could be used also to achieve a desired result. Examples in figures 1 – 3



Figure: 1: Artist: Adiele Obinna
Title: Ezi agwa bun ma (character is beauty)
Medium: Steel wires, nuts and rods
Size: 24” x 12.5
Year: 2019



Figure: 2: Artist: Adiele Obinna
Title: Contemplation
Medium: Steel wires and balls
Size: 25”x 14” x 15”
Year: 2019



Figure: 3: Artist: Adiele Obinna
Title: Lost
Medium: Steel wires and balls on cutting discs
Size: 28” x 17”
Year: 2019



Figure: 4: Artist: Maxwell Anyanwu
Title: Untitled
Medium:
Size: 8.5ft
Year: 2006

In the opinion of the study, sculpture and the gardens play significant roles in the growth and development of communities, nationally and globally, to the extent that sculptures may be effectively used in adorning the communities and or cities. They may also, be used in edifying and or adorning places of worship, including modern and traditional religions, especially, African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Catholic churches to mention a few.

However, apart from the Catholic churches, other notable orthodox churches including the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and others use art works, particularly, sculpture pieces in adorning their churches. In contemporary times, the study observes that Jehovah's Witness Christian organization. Through "Watch Tower" and "Awake" uses visual arts, particularly, graphics and paintings for effective communication and teaching. One may observe also, that other religious organizations like Freemason, Illuminati, Church of Satan and others use one form of visual arts or the other in adorning their temples or places of worship. Examples Photography, Painting, Graphics and or Sculpture.

However, it must be noted, that most of these religious organizations have beautiful garden settings that perform, emotional, psychological, therapeutic and other religious functions to humanity which sculpture gardens in it's entirety perform also. Apart from using sculptures in adorning the communities, temples other

places of worship, consideration of materials for durable sculpture pieces are significant in achieving the objectives of the study.

SCULPTURE GARDENS AND MATERIALS

Sculpture gardens may be considered as places devoted to the display of sculpture pieces created in different media ranging from stone, metal, fibre, cement or found objects. However, sculpture garden is a significant tourist attraction and also a source of inspiration, motivation, aesthetic awareness, therapeutic and or emotional healings to the public, particularly, tourists, students and artists.

Osita (2015:24) shares the view that sculpture garden provides an avenue through which sculpture pieces of different sizes and dimension including media are assembled in an open space for preservation and admiration, thereby, increasing aesthetic appeal and awareness. This awareness, to a considerable degree, is needed to move forward, artistically, culturally, technologically and educationally by creating enabling environment that could challenge, stimulate and inspire the interest of students, tourists, researchers and others in creative exploration as well as technological development which in the end may galvanize sustainable national development. Some examples of works in sculpture gardens are in figures 5 – 10.



Figure 5: Artist: Ibekwe Emmanuel
Title: The Warrior
Size: 6.3ft (180cm)
Year: 2009



Figure 6: Artist: Ugwuagbo Alphaeus O.
Title: Leadership Tussle (IMT Enugu)
Medium: Direct modeling
Size: 6.5 ft (180cm)
Year: 2011

SCULPTURE MATERIALS

Sculpture garden comprises sculpture of different sizes and materials in a garden setting. A successful sculpture garden is characterized by quality material types. However, in the opinion of Mayer (1981:587) "Sculptures employ three broad categories of techniques: carving, modeling (normally preparatory to casting) and assembly. The last is relatively new, deriving from revolutionary art movements during the first quarter of the twentieth century in France, Russia, and Germany. It also includes all work in which performed elements are joined, such as welded metal construction."

Osita (2014:86) asserts that sculpture materials suitable for sculpture gardens include metal, wood, glass, fibre, cement (concrete), marble and limestone, sand stone, alabaster stone, soap stone, onyx marble material, granite, bronze, found objects and others. It must be noted that the type of sculpture

to be produced to a large degree, determines the type of materials to be acquired and used for outdoor works that could stand different weathering conditions. Again, classification, strength and durability of the sculpture pieces depend wholly on the material used. Apart from skill and experience of the sculptors, materials, to a considerable extent, determine the strength and durability of each sculpture piece in the gardens. Metal is an example of sculpture materials. Naturally, metal is used for outdoor sculptures because of its quality of formability and strength. The type of metal often used for outdoor sculpture as observed by the study are cut, hammered, welded, joined with rivets to give a desired result. Apart from miniature sculptures and jewelry, metal as a sculpture material could be used for functional sculptures like wrought iron chairs, metal gates in private and public places. Figures 7, 8, and 9 examples



Figure: 7: Artist: Mgbefiofor Eric E
Title: Drummer.
Medium: Metal
Size: 3.1ft (90 cm)
Year: 2003)



Figure: 8: Artist: Okechukwu Opara
Title: Beggar (IMT) Enugu
Medium: Metal
Size: 7.3ft (210cm)
Year: 2008



Figure: 9: Artist: Okongwu JudeT
Title: Untitled
Medium: Metal
Size: 13.2ft
Year: 2011



Figure: 10: Artist: Onyishi Erasmus
Title: installation
Medium: Wood
Size: 8.3ft
Year: 2013

Other materials mostly used by sculptors in the creation of outdoor sculptures particularly, sculpture gardens are cement (concrete), wood, bronze and others as outlined above. Wood is not popularly used in the creation of outdoor sculptures in Nigeria as observed by the study unlike in the civilized or advanced countries like America, Germany, England, Russia, Belgium, China, Australia and others. In the opinion of the study, the reason for the less use or unpopular use of wood in the creation of outdoor

sculptures in Nigeria environment is principally because of the perishability of the wood which are often destroyed or eaten by termite and other weathering conditions and agents. In spite of the perishable nature of wood, some sculptors use wood for outdoor sculptures. Onyishi Erasmus of Nsukka is an example in figure 10

Another example is illustrated in figure 11 where Uche Onyishi uses stones to create outdoor sculptures of notable aesthetic values.

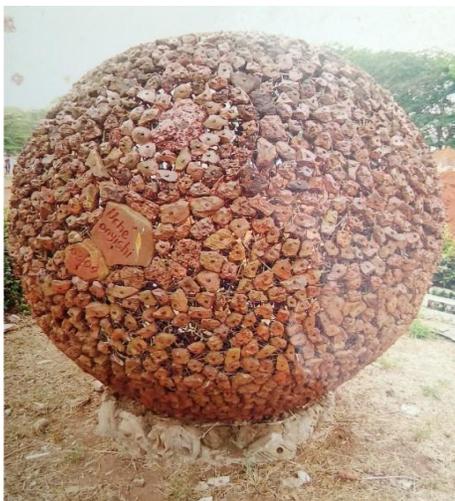


Figure: 11: Artist: Onyishi Uche
Title: The globe
Medium: Stone
Size: 7ft
Year: 2004



Figure: 12: Artist: Nnadiukwu Charles
Title: Untitled
Medium: Direct modeling
Size: 5.6ft
Year: 2010

Figures 12 - 14, include works on cement (concrete) which is most common in most of the sculpture gardens across the country. The reason for this is that the material is cheap, available, pliable and durable as well.

However, the study may not dwell so much on sculpture materials in terms of their uses, efficacies, durability, values and significance. Attention and effort are channeled to the direction of sculpture gardens as panacea for sustainable national development. To achieve the objectives of the study, the functions of sculpture gardens in the world, particularly Nigeria situation have come to stay. Naturally, because of the significant roles they play in the development of modern art in Nigeria and international communities. Sculpture gardens have different roles and functions which make them indispensable to modern society. In

the opinion of the study, some of these roles and functions are subsequently outlined thus;

- educational functions
- therapeutic functions
- economic functions
- tourist attraction centres
- aesthetic
- recreation
- preservation function and others

However, the above roles and functions of sculpture gardens situate them as veritable channels of sustainable development in any organized society. In conclusion, therefore, no society can grow or develop effectively without education, sculpture gardens could help facilitate education and people could be educated with and or through sculpture gardens.



Figure: 13: Artist: Eze Ikechukwu
Title: Libation
Medium: Direct Modelling
Size: 7.3ft
Year: 2010



Figure: 14: Artist: Okolonkwo
Title: Hunter
Medium: Direct Concrete
Size:
Year: 1985

Therapeutically, sculpture gardens provide solid platform through which people may receive emotional and psychological healing by viewing or going through the works in the gardens. By viewing the works in the sculpture gardens, certain feelings emanate from such works that may calm emotions, suppression, depression and psychological imbalance in individual or group.

Economically, sculpture gardens provide a source of revenue to the communities and the government as well as works therein, may be sold for economic purposes and wealth generated from such. They could also, attract people from every part of the

world, particularly, tourists researchers, scholars, lovers of arts, politicians and others. Such gardens may serve as tourist attraction centres and may result to economic gains and empowerment. In the opinion of the study, such centres serve as centres of aesthetic awareness and development as well as promotion of aesthetic appeal.

Sculpture gardens may provide a suitable playground for recreation and relaxation arenas where people of different mindsets may come for relaxation and recreation purposes for longevity and development of the mind and soul. Apart from the above, sculpture gardens may serve as a suitable place for preservation

of sculpture pieces for posterity and development of the society. In view of these therefore, one may be safe to conclude that sculpture gardens provide a preservation function to individual, group and or society and communities at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No society develops in isolation of her environment as it plays a complimentary role to the overall development of man. Man in this context, includes the arts and culture as well as tradition of the people. Man and environment may not be effectively separated as there is a significant synergy between the two phenomena. Sculpture gardens are integral parts of the society and therefore should be mobilized and integrated to reflect its or their importance to sustainable national development.

As it is in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China and other civilized societies, visual arts are encouraged in their institutions - from nursery through tertiary institutions. This is quite unlike Nigeria experience where the study of visual arts, particularly, sculpture are hampered on religious and political sentiments. The study is of the view that visual arts particularly sculpture should be encouraged and studied as well as incorporated into Nigeria education system to cater for the creative and technological needs of the society.

Sculpture gardens should be established or recreational centres beautified with different sculpture pieces of note to cater for the psychological, emotional and creative needs of the people.

Sculpture as a major aspect of creative and technological endeavours of man should be encouraged and mounted at strategic locations of the communities as a statement and power for creative and technological development, particularly for developing economies like Africa and other third world countries.

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