

## Full Length Research

# Visual Arts Culture and the Nigeria Environment; Panacea for Sustainable Development

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Misplacement of priorities may be considered one of the major setbacks associated with developing economies, particularly, Nigeria, indeed, Africa. Any issue that is not connected to looting, oil, politics and corruption is not given a due attention thereby, inspiring underdevelopment, hunger, migration and over dependency on importation of foreign goods. The study observes that the system in Nigeria context, has produced a pedestal, framework and a leadership that is not concerned with the welfare of the people, particularly, human capacity, economic growth, social system and others. Closure of borders, law against hate speech, urges for absolute power, marginalization of some tribes or geopolitical zones in Nigeria may not be a lasting solution to the economic woes of Nigeria at the moment. In view of these, therefore, the study tries to situate visual arts, culture environmental resource management and others as effective panacea for sustainable development. Different researches have been carried out, but no comprehensive studies in this direction hence the study. The objectives are achieved by employing participant observation method, including primary and secondary sources of data collation. Some of the findings includes the needful environment, visual arts and others are grossly neglected leading to chaos and anarchy and agitations, visual arts is effective panacea for sustainable growth and development and others. These paved way for conclusion and recommendations.

**Keywords:** Visual Arts Culture, Nigeria, Sustainable Development

## INTRODUCTION

Visual arts may be considered important and significant phenomena in the history and development of creative and technological advancement of Nigeria and beyond. It is for this reason, that visual arts as academic discipline are essentially inclusive in the school curricular, with particular reference to Faculty of Environmental Studies where it is domiciled in most of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Visual arts, within and outside the Faculty of Environmental Studies is a monumental path to knowledge and creative explorations.

Visual arts as a compendium of knowledge may be regarded as a commodity of the academic

marketplace in all contestations and may be seen as *Quod Erat Demonstrandum (QED)* in terms of creativity, imagination, entrepreneurship and technological advancement which most developing nations are in dire need of in contemporary times. Visual arts – architecture, painting, sculpture, graphics, textile design, ceramics as well as construction technology are products of the environment and remain inseparable from the environment. However, they both remain inseparable phenomena that may not be divorced from one another. Environment forms a pivotal pedestal for the effective existence of visual arts and visual arts on the other hand helps in the

improvement and development of the environment. It synergizes the environment. Environment, therefore, as described by Chima (2018) is the whole sum of the external surrounding conditions within which an organism, a community or an object exists.

In view of this, one may be safe to suggest that environment is the surroundings and or influences on man and his activities for effective existence.

There is a massive interconnectedness of Visual arts and environment hence the monumental paradigm uniting the two phenomena. The study shares the view that most of the problems facing the developing economies like Nigeria is the politics of post coloniality; where people from this part of the universe surrender to the

intellectual weight of Western Scientism if not Logocentrism as an ideal model for engaging issues of intellectualism and development of indigenous technologies. It is for this reason that Aniakor (2012), asserts that Western Construction of Knowledge are always accepted as foundational to development issues in Africa. Its construction has global status; its knowledge is an irreversible variant upon which all knowledge is based or arises.

In the view of the study, knowledge could be developed and interpreted for sustainable national development with or without paying due reference to Western Construction of Knowledge and Ideology. For example, the essence of Visual arts is to develop, a search for multiple centers of knowledge and power to develop a global site for creative ingenuity to strive above all contestations and interrogations. These on the whole could generate potential for capacity building and improvement of technology within the developing economies and beyond.

However, knowledge is power, a deliberate construction in an ideological fashion galvanizes realistic option of developing new knowledge from one's immediate environment. Technologically, scientifically and ideologically, a systematic construction and development of new knowledge based on synthesis of collective ideas, may inspire growth and development of sustainable national development in Nigeria and beyond with appropriate adoption and integration of visual arts.

Visual arts, therefore, becomes significantly a systematic route to knowledge that could drive the creative exploration into dynamic and vibrant, flourishing and independent economy. Enabling and suitable environment provide massive synergy for economic and industrial growth, thereby, catalyzing hugely sustainable national development.

Again, visual arts, if well embraced and projected in the forefront of creative dynasty, provides worthy intellectual and redemptive tool for the flowering of development and advancement of humanity and technological breakthrough. However, it could be pointed out that innovative technology may be

achieved through effective fine and applied arts enterprise. One may suggest that visual arts could be central pillar around which an agenda of realistic transformative growth and development may be built. In realistic terms, the importance of visual arts in a developing economy may not be over emphasized. Particularly, those with little or no creative, imaginative and technological base.

## VISUAL ARTS

Just like geography, physics, urban and regional planning, building, architecture, estate management, environmental resource management and others, visual art is a body of knowledge that appeals first to the sense of sight. It is a process, product, resourceful as well as enterprising, rewarding in the real sense that it helps one brings into existence out of intuition and dexterity, what is new and appealing to the sight. It serves as a catalyst to human empowerment and self-dependency.

Visual arts comprise painting, architecture, drawing, photography, sculpture, ceramics, textile designs, construction technology, theatre, drama and others. It must be noted that every form of human expression that appeals first to the sense of sight could be regarded as visual arts or fine and applied arts. It is a process and a product of the environment as the environment becomes a huge catalyst to the effective existence of visual arts.

Visual arts experiences inspire creativity and imagination and provides significant platforms for creative exploration that could anchor growth, energy and capacity building. It provides substantial pedigree for technology and entrepreneurial incubation that could catapult developing economies into social and vibrant economic independence.

Here are few examples of visual art impressions



**FIG 1: Egwu, Kelechi, Traditional Dancer 2017, Oil on Canvas, 90 x75cm, ABSU © Osita A. Williams A.**



**FIG 2: Obiageri, Fabian, Melody, 2017, Oil on Canvas, 90 x 75cm ABSU, © Osita W**

However, the salient issues which tend to be neglected or relegated to the background by the government agencies, individuals or corporate bodies are misplacement of priority, corruption-looting and lack of awareness which have massively hampered the effective growth and development of visual arts and its relevance to the society. One may acknowledge that in contemporary Nigeria situation any issue not related to politics and illicit acquisition of wealth is not taken seriously. For creativity, technology, economy and entrepreneurship to thrive, there must be a cultural and value driven orientation to resuscitate and reawake some lost values in terms of salient cultures and cultural elements seriously battling with extinction in the face of modernism. The study is of the view that Nigeria should have a ministry whose core mandate is to promote art, culture and tourism as a foreign exchange earner, income distributor and major employer of labor, a catalyst for rural development and poverty reduction and others. Visual arts, in all contestations and interrogations is silent, but salient medium of visual expression that could re-strategize the economy into job creation and provide a suitable playground for

technology and tourism to flourish. The financial benefits including social and economic implications may not be underestimated.

In support of this views Ojewuyi (2011) in a lecture presented at the national institute for cultural orientation, Lagos, states that in most advanced countries like France and others, the mission of the ministry of arts and culture is to make accessible to as many people as possible, the major works of humanity. In this capacity, the ministry develops cultural policy directed at the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in all its aspects and supports the creation of works of art and the development of artistic practices.





**Fig. 3: Obioma Precious, Pen and Ink, Culture, ABSU, 2019, 70 x 60cm. © Osita Osita, Williams A.**



**Fig. 4: Odikwa, Adanna, Unity, Oil on Canvas, 2018, ABSU, 90 x 70cm, © Williams A.**

Again, such ministry contributes together with other ministries to arts and cultural education of children and young adults throughout their training cycles. In the

developing economies, reverse is the case, when students only become aware of drawing or visual arts when they are forced or pushed to the faculty of environmental studies to pursue a degree in Fine and Applied Arts as a last resort, despite numerous and countless advantages and benefits this profession offer to individuals and the society at large.

However, underrating or relegation of this noble profession by the contemporary political class in pursuit of trivial issues may be counterproductive to the overall development of a society that is in dire need of human, economic and technological advancement. In view of this therefore, Aniakor (2012) in his contributions to *Africa and the Politics of Postcoloniality* suggest, visual arts should serve as a counter strategy for redefining new global sites that could anchor individual and national identities and place Africa within the global space.

One may therefore, suggest that visual arts is a monumental environment that could synergize and flourish tourism and place the nation in the frontier of artistic, technological and economic empowerment. The study further suggests, there should be value driven orientation that could foster strong, reliable and sustainable national development, if the

available environment could be effectively harmonized to a considerable degree to reflect and inspire creativity, thereby, paving way for technological development. It is the view of the study, that the environment is there and available. Based on this therefore, Ogbonna (2018) raises a salient question where and what is where? In his 39<sup>th</sup> inaugural lecture contribution to knowledge *Where and What is Where? Understanding the Centrality of Location in Geospatial Decisions* where emphasis is on significance of decision making. Government, individuals, corporate bodies and institutions should be effective decision conscious and awareness must be in situ to move creativity, technology and the economy forward.

Again, Holistically and realistically, how effective and constructive, does the government of the day, individuals, corporate bodies put the available environment in contemporary times. For this reason, Chima (2018) in his 37<sup>th</sup> inaugural lecture observes that there is *Water, Water Everywhere, But Not Enough*. In Nigeria context today, the study concludes therefore, there is environment, environment everywhere but not enough for the much needed economic and technological advancement, hence visual arts, and Nigeria environment, a sustainable perspective. More examples of visual arts impressions below may help



**Fig 5: Architectural Designs**

Source: [www.pinterest.designs/arc.designs.com](http://www.pinterest.designs/arc.designs.com)



**Fig 6: Architectural Designs**

Source: [www.pinterest.designs/arc.designs.com](http://www.pinterest.designs/arc.designs.com)

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