

Full length Research

Visual Arts as Intellectual Property, Southeastern Nigeria Dimension.

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Visual arts may be considered a massive intellectual property based on its numerous contributions to knowledge, creativity, imagination, technology as well as human and national development. The study considers visual arts as ideas, feelings, expressions by man through certain media on two- or three-dimensional platforms and may be viewed a significant route to knowledge, aesthetic awareness, entrepreneurial and human development. Despite its numerous contributions to the wider society, its potency is neglected and relegated to the background. Again, researches have been carried out in different areas of visual arts, without comprehensive studies on this subject in relation to Ndigbo, hence the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collation are used to achieve the objectives of the study, including unstructured interviews and photographs. The objectives are further achieved against the backdrop of art formalism and art historical theories. The findings include: Ndigbo are acclaimed for the quality of their art works which have positioned them culturally, creatively and industrially as exemplified by the archaeological findings of 1959 by Thurstan Shaw in Igboukwu as supported by Ekpo (2008). Again, Ndigbo are situated as great historical, creative, cultural and artistic architecture in Igbo communities and beyond. Visual arts epitomizes intellectual property as noted by Uche Okeke, and Chike Aniakor (2012), Conclusively, visual arts as intellectual enterprise inspires strategic remoulding and remodelling of man, science, technology, culture, aesthetics and economic enterprises which may trigger sustainable national development. The findings and projected conclusion paved way for recommendations.

Keywords: Visual arts, intellectual property, Southeastern Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

This exercise believes that knowledge is totally derived from pure reason and rationalism which occasionally is synonymous with intellectualism. However, intellectualism implies the effective use, exercise and development of the intellect and knowledge. Most developed economies like United States, United Kingdom, China, Japan and others are distinguished or identified based on their cultural and economic policies, international relations, development of knowledge, skills and other potential that could enhance and empower man and society.

However, in Nigeria today, there are many

things wrong with the system which inadvertently affect the growth and development of the economy. Some of these include ineffective and non-implementation of policies, non existence of effective economic blueprint and lack of creative and cultural policies that may massively boost the growth and development of man and the environment. Such shortfalls affect significantly the development of every geopolitical zones including southeastern Nigeria. It is for these reasons that the study tries to highlight the usefulness of visual arts to man and society. To situate visual arts as a body of knowledge that could transform man and sustainable

development. Again, to emphasize, that visual arts as intellectual property, could be used to galvanise, redefine, reposition and promote cultural values as well as restore the dignity of man and the society.

Apart from these, visual arts may be used to transform and change the narrative and place Ndigbo creatively, culturally and artistically in international marketplace. In the opinion of Azeez, art as a multifunctional phenomenon closely relates to people and their culture.¹ He further observes that the multifunctionality of art as a body of knowledge and for expressive symbolism in a diversified and socio-cultural setting put extra obligations on the society to explore available opportunities to grow beyond where they are at the moment, creatively and technologically as well as industrially.²

However, Ndigbo are from the present south-eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria and are acclaimed for the quality of their creative works of art which come in different forms and materials, ranging from bronze, brass-smitting, raffia, beads, masks and masquerading, wood, concrete, and others. In fact, the greatest contribution Africa has made to world culture is its fine rendition and tradition of sculptures on wood and bronze.³ Bronzes of Igbookwu were discovered by Thurstan Shaw in 1938. History and international observers record that radio carbon test agree in dating these bronze objects to the end of the first millennium, which makes this the earliest bronze-using culture in Nigeria⁴.

It must be noted, however, that these creative and artistic ingenuity brought Ndigbo to limelight and gave Ndigbo international recognition till date. Therefore, the research shares the view that creative and imaginative endeavours like visual arts should be encouraged, sustained and maintained in a society that

craves and strives for economic, cultural and technological advancement.

Visual arts is a huge aspect of Igbo culture and may not be totally removed from their daily life existence hence visual arts revolves around Igbo communities till date. Culture, colossally becomes a massive part of Igbo identity and could be seen as a total way of people's life.⁵ Ayakoroma citing the Websters Dictionary of the English Language defines "culture" as the training and development of the mind; the refinement of taste and manners acquired by such training; the social and religious structures, intellectual and artistic manifestations and others that characterise a society.⁶

Again, the cultural policy for Nigeria defines "culture" as

*The totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours.*⁷

However, it must be observed that culture is a product of environment and intellectualism which encompasses arts and other ways of life of a people that give meaning or order to the communities they live in. It embodies the attitude of a people to the future of their traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology which is essentially a product of intellectualism and a monumental route to knowledge, growth and sustainable economic development. Again, visual arts is expressed in different forms as an avenue for cultural identity as exemplified in figure 1 and 2.



Figure 1: Chris Afuba, MboAgu (The Tiger Asleep), 2008 ©Osita Williams 2019



Figure 2: Krydz Ikwuemesi, So long a letter, acrylic wood & on board, 24x56 ft (x6), 2009 © Osita Williams 2019

There is no doubting the fact that visual arts as a product of the intellect is embedded in the taxonomy of educational objectives which are classified into three domains: The cognitive, affective and psychomotor. However, these domains, effectively situate visual arts as a product of intellectualism and massive route to knowledge, hence it's inclusion in the school curricular. The study may not focus attention on legalistic aspect of intellectual property as it relates to patent rights, copy rights and others, but the content and scope of visual arts as a dependable body of knowledge which significantly defines it as a product of the intellect and

intellectualism as exemplified by Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. The study submits therefore, that the scope and content of visual arts are more inclined to cognitive, psychomotor and finally, the affective borders on character, discipline and values.

Visual arts as intellectual property provides entrepreneurial and tactical synergy that could develop human capacity and other areas of endeavour for sustainable development. Visual arts as a multi-functional discipline, serves as a social commentator and a mediating link between man and his culture.⁸

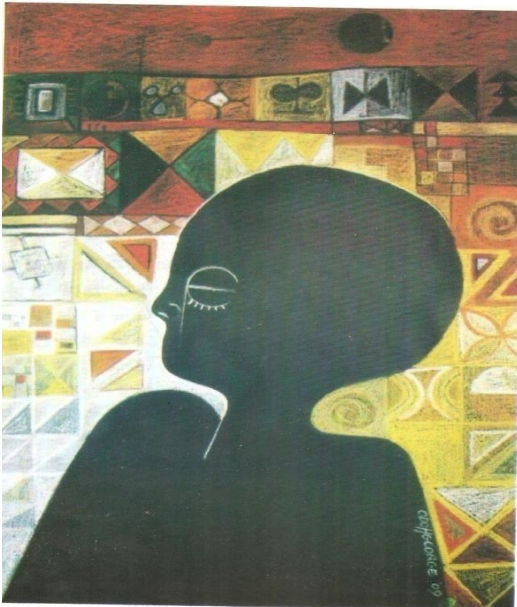


Figure 3: George Odo, Ikemefuna, Pastel on 25" © Osita Williams 2019

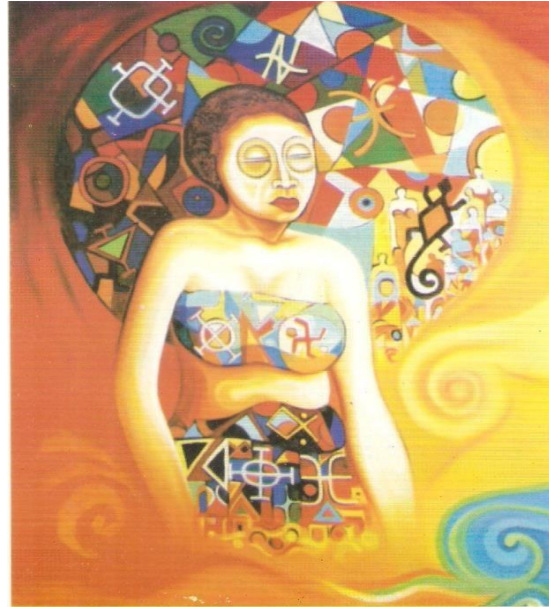


Figure 4: Nneka Odo, Oil on Canvas, 140 x 44 ©Osita paper, 20" x Williams 2019

VISUAL ARTS

In the wider sense, this is a body of knowledge and an activity of man which appeals first to the sense of sight. It connotes the intrinsic and extrinsic perceptual appeal. It is a process and a product of the environment which is a huge catalyst to the effective existence of man. However, visual arts experiences inspire creativity and imagination and provides huge platform for creative exploration that may anchor growth, synergy, potential, and capacity building. It provides substantial environment for technology and entrepreneurial incubation that may shoot developing economies into economic world powers.

Visual arts comprises painting, history, sculpture, graphics, ceramics, textiles, construction and others. Any of these areas of endeavour is a huge body of knowledge that could inspire sustainable human capacity which may boost economic development. The

study is of the view that visual arts is not accorded its due place in South-eastern Nigeria today. Something has to be done urgently to restore and tap from repertoire of experiences provided by visual arts to individuals and communities at large in Igbo land. For Ndigbo to move forward, culturally, technologically and economically, there should be continuity from the legacies of the ancestors or forefathers instead of discarding, such legacies may be sustained, and handed over from one generation to the other. Igboukwu bronze, examples, masks and masquerading, Ohafia war dance, *Ekpe* festivals, *Irumgbede*, *Iwa-akwa*, *Oru-Owerri* and few others battling and contesting with extinction at the moment could be revitalized, sustained, projected to reflect its usefulness to the society

In the opinion of the study, visual arts is culture oriented and cultural in dimension and may be used to project and promote culture, skill, entrepreneurship, technology and human capacity in diverse ways. It is for these reasons in the view of the study that visual arts is classified as *sine qua non* to human and national development. However, visual arts as an intellectual property connotes moral rectitude, mental and academic inclinations as well as attitude that may inspire transformative, creative and sustainable technology in southeastern Nigeria.

SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

Ndigbo occupy majority parts of Southern Nigeria which at the moment, geopolitically, classified as Southeastern Nigeria. However, it comprises, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States as contained in figure 5.

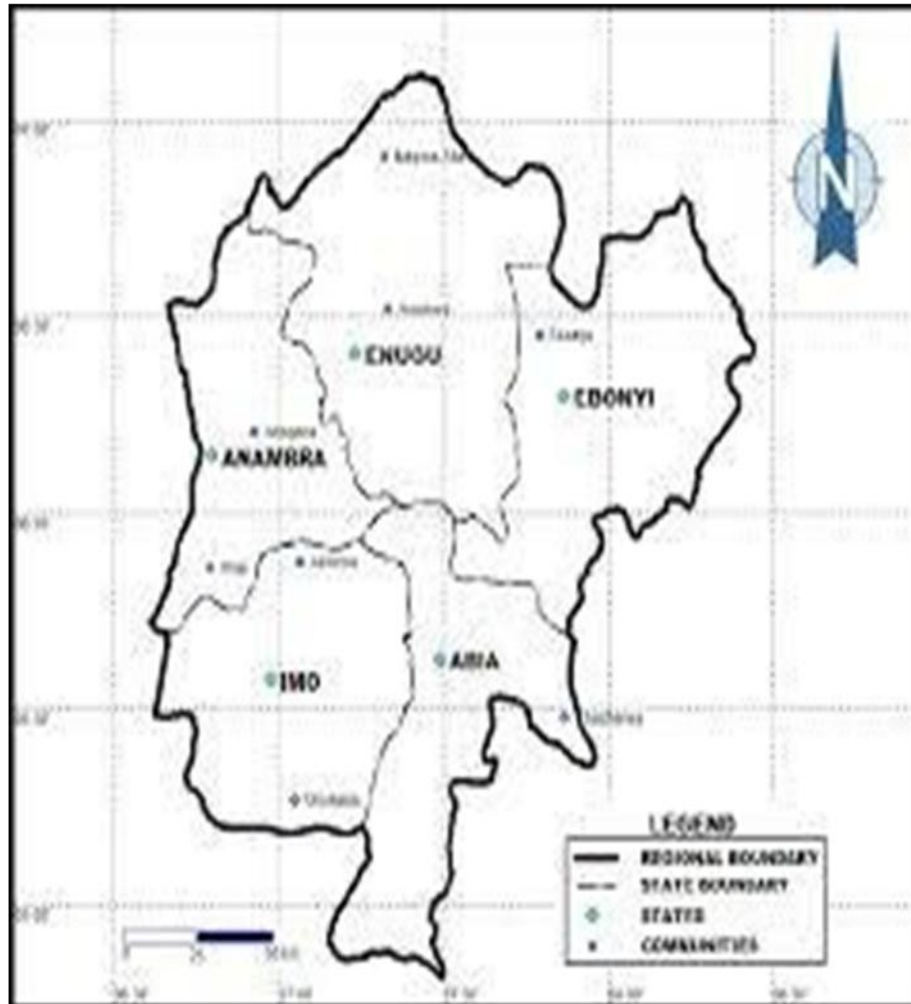


Figure 5: Map of Southeastern Nigeria, 2019, © osita, Williams A, 2019

They are notably farmers and are acclaimed for the quality of their creative art works, technological inclination and creative exploration which have metamorphosed into their present stature including technical as well as creative ingenuity in international scene as exemplified by their creative works of art documented in 1938 by Thurstan shaw in Igbo ukwu

bronze discovery in the present day Anambra state.⁹ Other notable examples include creative exploration and fabrication of war machines during Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970 including other notable creative works of art as exemplified in Figure. 6-8.



As old as Man, variables

Figure 6: Ogakwu, Chinedu, As old as Man, Variables ©Osita Williams (2019)

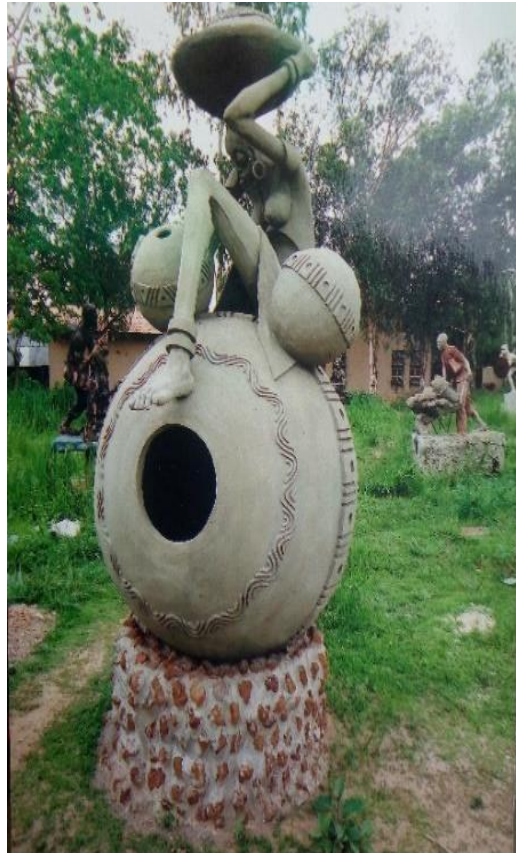


Figure 7: Okpe Byzantine (Cultural Affiliation) 2010 Direct modelling 13ft. © Osita Williams 2019

However, it must be noted that visual arts inspires innovative technology and development of imaginative and creative ideas that may anchor sustainable development. One may be safe to accept

that Ndigbo are creatively and artistically endowed and have placed themselves creatively and technologically in the international world map, which is a huge testimony to Igbo values and civilization

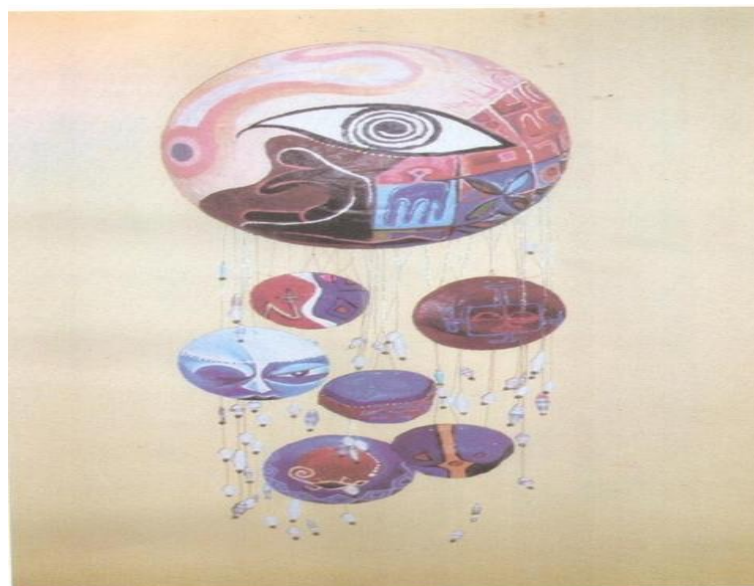


Figure 8: Nneka Odo, Like Shadow of Ourselves, Installaion, 2012 © Osita Williams (2019)

It is the position of the study that Ndigbo should look beyond oil, petty politics, and reduce the incessant urge for migration to other cities outside Igbo land to develop and invest their resources therein. Igbo should tap from the benefits other areas of endeavour may provide, such as visual arts, architecture theatre/performing arts as well as history and literal arts. One may quickly observe that Ndigbo are scattered all over Nigeria and beyond and contribute to the economic, cultural, artistic and technological development of those communities and massively consider such places as their permanent places of abode.

Ndigbo have contributed to the development of Benin arts, Yoruba, Ibibio arts, Islamic arts and beyond because of their high migration rate to these areas. One may conclude therefore, that visual arts to a greater degree is a creative and imaginative enterprise which forms the bedrock of human, environmental, scientific, industrial and technological development of any organized and established society, and may be used to develop further, the potential and entire Igbo communities. Ndigbo, should realize that visual arts has intrinsic and extrinsic perceptual appeal and a massive pedestal for creativity and imagination, thereby, paving way for entrepreneurial, technological and economic breakthrough. To this extent, it is the position of the study that visual arts encourages development of culture, architecture engineering, entrepreneurship, imagination,

technology and others which are products of the intellect and may anchor growth and development of economic power among nations. Ikwuegbu shares the view that development of human beings through imaginative and creativity help in actualizing human development strategy, rather than focusing on oil, politics and few other areas of human endeavours.¹⁰ He also agrees that development is more than just the acquisition of industries, but includes such ideals of modernization as rise in productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical know- how improved institutions and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy approaches that may develop human potentials.¹¹

The study shares the view that Ndigbo are creatively endowed and creativity is massively pivotal to effective economic development. Creativity and imagination predominantly, remain in situ within the domains of visual arts and technology in contemporary and historical times. It facilitates significantly the growth and development of national and international technology, thereby, galvanizing and inspiring sustainable development in all considerations. However, the stratospheric economic hardship faced by the developing economies may be reduced hugely, by systematically and strategically positioning visual arts as a creative and technological metaphor that may enhance the creative and technological base of

Southeastern Nigeria economy.

In support of these views “the Pride of Black Race” in Ojukwu’s first post war speech in February 1994 citing Udeagha, in an interview, where he highlights that in the three years of Nigeria/Biafra war, necessity gave birth to invention. During the war, bombs, rockets and others were built, Ndigbo creatively designed and built their own delivery system. They fabricated and maintained engines, machines and technical equipment’s. However, Ndigbo extracted and refined petrol with their own indigenous technology called the “Biafran Pot”. Again, Ndigbo built and maintained airports and air strips. They maintained them under heavy bombardment. They spoke to the world through a telecommunication system engineered by local ingenuity. Ndigbo created and built armored tanks and cars within three (3) years and became civilized and most technologically and intellectually advanced black people. These artistic and creative ingenuity were achieved with ruthless efficiency.¹²

Gowing (1995) opines that the art of Igboukwu bronze of 1938 is a monumental testimony to the creative and artistic prowess of Ndigbo.¹³ However, these artistic pedigree brought Ndigbo to limelight and gave them international recognition till date. Therefore, creative and artistic endeavours have been parts of Igbo identity and civilization from prehistoric to modern era.

However, it must be noted that tradition (culture) in relation to Ndigbo in contemporary times, have lost the basic ingredients that situate it as a significant phenomenon that defines a people or race in a given society. This accounts for loss in beliefs, essence, values, identity and customs of Ndigbo today. This development has impacted negatively on the growth and development of Igbo identity and civilization. It is on this account that Uche Okeke resisted the avalanche of Western ideologies and suggests that “Synthesis” of ideas and a marriage of indigenous and western school of thought to arrive at dependable solution to indigenous problems. This position becomes an eye opener that “Igbo is great” in culture, creative and artistic creations as exemplified by Uche Okeke, Chinua Achebe, Chike Aniakor, Krydz Ikwuemesi, Bona Ezeudu, Okay Ikenegbu, Chris Afuba, Obi Ekwenchi, George Odoh, Ikwuegbu Nnamdi and others. Apart from Igboukwu bronze discovery, there are other art forms and elements of Igbo extraction that have situated, projected and promoted Igbo artistic prowess as intellectual property in national and international scenes. For example *Uli/uri* linear arts forms and elements which are made popular by Uche Okeke and University of Nigeria, Nsukka art school in recent times Figure 9 and 10 are good examples.



Figure 9: Uche Joel Cima, Manuscript, Mixed media
© Osita Williams 2019



Figure 10. Chukz Okonkwo, Weaver Song, wood and metal 43cm x 92cm © OsitaWilliams 2019

The study, therefore, may be safe to suggest that the contemporary linearical body decoration all over the world

today known as "Tattoo" originated from Ndigbo in southeastern Nigeria because before Uche Okeke brought "*Uli/Uri*" to limelight and to the body of academism, evidences abound that such body decoration had been part of Igbo identity and civilization from prehistoric times till date. The study is of the opinion that before the advent of Igbo bronze discovery, "*Uli/Uri*" – body and wall decoration had been in existence. It grew and went beyond

southeast to southsouth and others. Historically this traditional art culture projects and represents Igbo values, identity, civilization and had existed before the prehistoric times as acknowledged by Agomoh (2017), Ekechukwu (2018) and Agoh (1999), and these cultures have become a vanishing identity amongst Ndigbo as shown in figure 11 ¹⁴



Figure 11: Maduawuke Ifesinachi J. Instalation of Igbo traditional wrestling 2013 6.8 ft © Osita, Williams 2014

Based on the above, Ndigbo, therefore, may be situated as great historical, creative, cultural and artistic architecture in southeastern Nigeria and beyond.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, visual art as intellectual enterprise inspires strategic remolding and remodeling of man, science, technology, culture and economic enterprise which may boost sustainable development. The study suggests, therefore, that Ndigbo should develop a creative and cultural policies that may project and promote artistic creations for sustainable development. Ndigbo, should create artistic dynasty in southeastern Nigeria that may boost tourism and economic advancement. Visual arts enhances the imaginative and creative mind of the individuals which boost the entrepreneurial and technological inclination of man and the society. Therefore, such endeavours may be encouraged for a society that is in dire need of development like Southeastern Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ndigbo should be culture and value driven.
2. Visual arts must be encouraged at various levels of the child's education-Primary, Secondary and Tertiary institutions in Southeastern Nigeria.
3. Most of the Igbo art cultures facing extinction at the moment could be revived and sustained for futuristic focus.
4. The Igbo-ukwu bronze art culture could be revived and maintained for sustainable national development.
5. Visual arts should be highly encouraged as it inspires imagination and creativity which are colossal pedestals on which human empowerment and sustainable technology could be built upon.
6. Art and cultural museums may be established in the southeastern Nigeria regions to preserve and promote cultural values of Ndigbo.
7. The study, strongly supports the view of Aniakor in "Africa and the Politics of Postcoloniality" where he states that Art should be mobilized as a weapon of recovery, a tool in the archeology of knowledge, of interrogation and contestations. Art should serve as a counter strategy for redefining new global sites that could anchor individual and national identities and place Africa (Ndigbo) within the global space.¹⁵

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