

Dance and Museology: Complexities and Potential Relevance in the Nigerian Context

Nneamaka Igbonezim
amaka.ezim@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this work, the term museuming dance refers to the collection and preservation of dance as heritage in the museum; that is, safeguarding dance as a museum object. Fascinated by the originally western notion of curating dance in the museum, this paper looks at the possibility or not of achieving the museuming of dance in an African context. Attempts will be made to highlight the difference between dance in the museum/museum dancing and museuming dance in the context of this work. The argument presented here is that the preservation of dance in the museum is contrary to the Nigerian way of living and experiencing dance as a tradition. The preservation of traditional dances in the museum could imply the diminishing of its meaning to the local practitioners. To tackle this issue, I problematize the term 'museum', taking into cognizance its relevance, functions, advantages, and disadvantages. I also examine the concept of heritage, tangible and intangible, in relation to the UNESCO 2003 *Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH). Finally, certain steps are proposed in order to achieve a dance/museology relationship that would boost museum activities and bring about more museum visitors in Nigeria.

Key words: Museum, Dance, Igboamaka, Museuming dance, Igbo Ukwu.

Introduction

Fascinated by the originally western notion of museuming dance, this paper looks at the possibility or not of achieving the museuming of dance in an African context. In this work, the term museuming dance refers to the collection and preservation of dance as heritage in the museum; that is, safeguarding dance as a museum object. Attempts will be made to highlight the difference between dance in the museum/museum dancing and museuming dance in the context of this work.

The argument presented here is that the preservation of dance in the museum is contrary to the Nigerian way of living and experiencing dance as a tradition. This is because traditionally, dance is very much tied to the social context and community in which it is presented. The writer opines that the preservation of such traditional dances in the museum could imply the diminishing of its meaning to the local practitioners who embody the art as a living art which is not static and should not be frozen. In this essay, I will further explain why Nigerian culture might not accommodate museuming dance. Although museuming dance has proven to thrive successfully in the western world as seen in the case of France and the United Kingdom, Is the Nigerian culture disposed to accept this idea? The researcher takes the position that certain adjustments have to be made if dance is incorporated into museum programs into.

This paper therefore proposes such adjustments. To tackle this issue, I will problematize the term ‘museum’, taking into cognizance its relevance, functions, advantages, and disadvantages. I will also examine the concept of heritage, tangible and intangible, in relation to the UNESCO 2003 *Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH). The problem of not having a clear-cut separation between the intangible and tangible, in relation to

heritage, is seen in UNESCO'S definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage which includes 'artefacts, cultural spaces' and other tangible objects (UNESCO 2003, p. 3). My paper will suggest that the UNESCO list of World Intangible Cultural Heritage can be seen as a "virtual museum" of world heritage, whilst exerting a level of control over the participating countries and influencing the decisions about which forms of intangible cultural heritage to protect and what counts as intangible cultural heritage based on UNESCO rules. I refer to it as a "virtual museum" because it is concerned with collecting and preserving heritage through application entries (objects) and listing them online for the global recognition.

The Museum

The fluidity of the function of a museum is simply observable through the contemporary notion of curating dance in the museum. There is the need, thus to ask whether the museum is an institution and a construct concerned with safeguarding tangible heritage or intangible heritage. Since the 20th century, there have been questions raised about rethinking the museum and its role in the heritage business. Several scholars have attempted to define the term museum. Defining a museum, like the term dance, is quite problematic and has been an ongoing attempt. Duncan Cameron a Canadian Museologist states: 'attempts to define a museum have been made for almost as long as there have been museums, yet there is no definition to my knowledge that meets with everyone's satisfaction' (2004, p. 63). *The Collins dictionary* defines a museum as 'a place or building where objects of historical, artistic, or scientific interest are exhibited, preserved, or studied' (Collins dictionary online, 2015). According to Alma Wittlin, a researcher in museum studies, the International Council of Museums (ICOM)

defines a museum as ‘an establishment in which objects are the main means of communication’ (2004, p. 44). These definitions emphasize the importance of objects in the museum as they are the core of museum activities and it is through them that knowledge is generated and shared.

The *Collins dictionary* definition highlights ‘objects of interest’ and it becomes valid to ask whose interest is invoked here? Is it the interest of the curators, or that of the visitors and tourist, or the interest of the community where the museum is situated? I believe there is no right or wrong response to this question as it is dependent on the focus of the specific museum, its context, and its defined target audience. Relating this to the notion of a virtual museum earlier stated, the interests in that context would be explicitly that of the practicing community and implicitly the organization UNESCO, because of the level of control over the participating countries and the entries accepted.

The International Council of Museums constantly updates its definition of a museum in relation to societal development and the experienced realities in the museum community worldwide. Thus at present, according to the ICOM Statutes, which were adopted in Vienna, in 2007, a museum is defined as:

A non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (International Council of Museum online, 2015).

This definition makes reference to the society and the public, thus, visitors and the accommodating community can fall under these categories, whose interest should be projected in the museum. The

Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monument (NCMM), Abdallah Yusuf Usman as quoted in the Daily Times e-newspaper, defines the museum thus “The museum is the central bank of cultural resources, a collection of memories about man’s way of life, his achievements and progress over time” (Daily Times, 2015). This definition of a museum makes no reference to educational purposes but focuses on storage, preservation and memory. No wonder the author of the article *Nigerian Museums: Any Relevance to the Present Generation?* states that ‘the main purpose of the museum is neither to educate nor entertain, it is a memory bank to remind one of the past’ (Daily Times, 2015).

American museologist, Theodore Low, proposes to look into the nature of the museum in order to answer the question, what is a museum? This means taking into cognizance the activities that are carried out in the institution. Museum administrator Rea Paul, as quoted by Low further speaks about the activities in a museum thus: ‘...the acquisition and preservation of objects, the advancement of knowledge by the study of objects, and the diffusion of knowledge for the enrichment of the life of the people’ (Rea in Low 2004, p. 32). In introducing the anthology of articles *Rethinking the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives to the Paradigm Shift*, Anderson Grail recognizes a very important shift in the priorities of the museum as an institution, which is prioritizing and making central the needs of the ‘visitor, education and public service’ as against making collections the centre of museum activities. He advocates the use of museum collections to advance the educational activity of the museum. The value of the museum is according to Anderson no longer dependent on how many collections they have, but how efficient they are in public service (2004, p. 4).

A definition of the role of the museum that takes into cognizance the notion of intangibility is seen in International Council of Museums web page where it is stated that ‘museums can contribute significantly to the protection of intangible cultural heritage by means of recordings and transcriptions’ (International Council of Museum online, 2015). This establishes a perspective of the museum as a place to protect intangible cultural heritage. Since dance is regarded as an intangible cultural heritage, can this perspective be seen as a foundational principle for curating dance in the museum space? If Nigerian traditional dances are curated in museums, what happens to theatres staging similar dances in Nigeria? I will attempt answering these questions further down the paper whilst discussing Museums in Nigeria.

Museums in Nigeria

The first museum to be established in Nigeria is the Esie Museum located in Igbomina town of Esie, Irepodun Local Government Area in Kwara state. This museum was established in 1945 and since then the number of museums in Nigeria have presently risen forty-seven. These museums are managed by the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments and partly funded by the federal government. Some of them are situated in educational institutions such as universities while others are in villages, cities and towns. Early researchers opine that the establishment of museums in Nigeria was born out of a colonial motive.

The museum movement in West Africa is relatively young and admittedly based on an earlier European model. The first museums were colonial: set up for the purposes of ethnological research and put at the disposal of the colonial

administrative and mercantile class. (Bohn and Mckie 1983, p.12)

As stated above, the establishment of museums in West Africa, which started in the 20th century, was a neo-colonial move. Although museums were ostensibly established for the benefit of local populations, the colonial masters were enriching themselves through 'indiscriminate acquisition of valuable objects' of material culture of Africa (Lopez 2002, p. 1). In order to remedy the situation of a great loss of valuable cultural objects, postcolonial African countries like Nigeria set up rules against the exportation of cultural artifacts in 1953, and many such objects were seized at the airport by customs officials, from the luggage of some expatriates (Bohn and Mckie, 1983). The government decided to take seriously the museum institution as a storage house to preserve their now valued heritage as 'several Nigerian museums were founded shortly after this to house the new and burgeoning national collection' (Bohn and Mckie 1983, p. 12).

According to Awuah, 'Museums and galleries are arguably the most significant facilities for housing tangible heritage materials and, in doing so, allowing people to make connections to the past' (2016:22). As established in western tradition, the museum is a place of housing the past which has been valued as heritage for its significance, but the African notion of time and the past is quite different from that of westerners. While 'the general western understanding of past, present, and future conceives of them as distinct entities, unfolding in linear fashion and following a definitively prescribed, therefore irreversible order' (Gore & Grau 2014, p. 123), for Nigerians and Africans by extension, the past is as present as the future. The present, past, and future are in a constant dialogue, always interacting, and we embody this

interaction in our daily activities. For example, whilst entertaining guests, kola nut (fruit of Kola tree that grows in Africa) is broken and this is done with words recognizing the presence of the ancestors as well as making a connection with the world of the unborn. Thus it can be seen as unnecessary to preserve the past in a house called ‘museum’, taking into consideration the African way of living and relationship with the past and future.

As a growing Nigerian youth, I hardly visited any museums in Nigeria. This is because my mindset of a museum was that of a place for the exotic, thus, I was not fascinated by the structure or the superficial experience of connecting to history and the past through objects, when “visiting it”. This is not to say that everyone thinks like me, but being born and living in Nigeria for twenty-four years gives me a leverage to speak of a popular mentality of many Nigerians as regards certain subjects like the museum. Random interviews conducted by daily times newspaper journalists with different Nigerians from different works of life on the relevance of the museums in Nigeria to the present generation agree with the above mindset. Mrs Oluwakemi Malomo, a business woman in Lagos, observes that the museums in Nigeria have a very low patronage and this to her is because of the imminent lack of curiosity in Nigerians about the past. She describes the museums in Nigeria as “desolate and underutilized”. In her words;

when you mention museum now, a lot of youths are likely going to look askance if not look at you as old school. The mention of Shoprite, Mama Cass, Domino and others will easily excite them more than museum. Most Nigerians are not interested in our museums anymore. It is unfortunate that the present generation is not tapping into the rich history the museum has to offer (Daily Times, 2015).

The inability of many Nigerian museums to create adequate online presence has hindered my getting statistics of guests and visitors to any of the museums in Nigeria, which as expressed above is relatively poor. This is because the museum culture is yet to be fully appropriated into the living experience of the Nigerian public.

According to Jeremy Coote in his review of the Journal, *Museums & History in West Africa* by Claude Ardouin and Emmanuel Arinze, ‘Ardouin criticizes “most museums” in West Africa for ‘reproducing an ethnographic, a-historic, if not downright folkloric image of the societies that they present’ (Ardouin and Arinze 1997, p. 1), which in turn leads to an impression that they have no existence outside ethnography and archaeology. This critique relates to the limited presentation of recent history in museums, but also to the ‘all-too-common portrayal of pre-colonial societies as hermetically sealed and unchanging’ (Coote 2004, p. 307). In this light, there is the need for the transformation of the Nigerian museum from ‘simply a place where works of excellence’ and historical relevance ‘are exhibited and interpreted to the public, to include a place where the unknown and experimental should be given a chance to happen’, notwithstanding the outcome (Duncan 2004, p. 62).

The museum is not the first place one’s mind will go to for leisure in Nigeria, thus, the Nigerian museum is faced with the challenge to remain relevant in the contemporary society. Legal practitioner, Nwachukwu Ephraim points out the prime function of museums on developed places like Europe and America to be that of “offering enjoyable and rewarding stimulation for individual minds in their hours of freedom from their daily chores” (Daily times, 2015). He attributes this and also the sale of souvenir materials major reasons why these museums are successfully generating much revenue for their government and also attracting

high patronage from people. Olabisi Onabanjo University Ogun state lecturer, Dr Yomi Akindele, calls for the meaningful development and proper financing of museums in Nigeria so that the nation can take advantage of the museum's ability to be a vital source of revenue. On the issue of public patronage, he calls for a rethinking of the role of the museums and the cultural programming in the museums to involve more Nigerian youths as he states

At the moment, it appears that Nigerian museums must diversify in their cultural programmers in serving the public. This is because the traditional role of collection, housing and showcasing to the public is fast becoming un-motivating to the general public. It is pertinent that the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) as an umbrella body of public museums in Nigeria should look toward making policies that will rejuvenate museums. (Daily Times, 2015).

In order to transform the museums in Nigeria to choice locations for the general public, there needs to be an 'intense examination of values and assumptions, the scope and nature of services offered, the focus and approach to leadership and management, and the relationship between the museums and the people they wish to serve- the public' (Anderson 2004, p. 1). The museum also needs to display the experienced reality of the community it is situated in. Thus, the museum should serve as an agency for molding and reflecting public taste and opinion (Adam, 1939). Although Thomas Adam made this statement in relation to American museums, it is still valid for museums around the world to consider their local community. He emphasizes the importance of the 'social content' of a museum as he sees the institution as

meaningless to all but the curators, in the absence of a social content (Adam, 1939)

Dance in the Nigerian Museum

The very notion of installing dance in the museum as dance scholar Alessandra Lopez y Royo posits is an intrinsically disturbing thought because it seeks to objectify the dance and the dancers as well as present the dance as exotic (Lopez y Royo 2002, p.1). Such presentation of dance, in my opinion, would not come across as being presented for the consumption of the local community in Nigeria. This is because traditionally, Nigerians do not dance just for the sake of executing a movement activity to sound called dancing, but dance partly because of the relationship between their social and cosmic world, alongside the representation of dance in their daily living.

Research has proven that in Nigeria and by extension Africa, dance is used to mark major milestones in the life of a person; from procreation to child care and upbringing, puberty, festivals, marital union, initiation into groups, even to daily activities like moonlight storytelling. Thus, if we seek to reduce dance to an object, it is countering the lived social reality of the people and ‘the very nature of an object changes when it becomes a museum object...it takes on a new quality. You and I will judge it differently’ (Duncan 2004, p. 70). This is because the museum objects are carefully selected with a level of ‘expert judgment’ as well as the value ascribed to a museum space and what it presents as good, authentic. At this point expertise is taken from the hands of the heritage bearers to the collectors and curators whose decision may not be accepted by the locals.

Listening to a lecture in Roehampton University, London, by Sara Wookey a postmodern choreographer who has created

works in galleries and museum spaces (Wookey, 2015 [lecture]), it comes across that her works with museums are not necessarily tied to history or the heritage of a specific culture, or to the specific contents of the museum, but more related to creating any kind of movement activity in a museum space that is empty or less used by public. This could be deduced as one of her ideas of dance in the museum. At this point, it is necessary to point out that museuming dance and museum dancing differ. Museum dancing is concerned with heritage and/as preservation while the latter focuses on animating the museum space. Museum dancing can also take the form of ‘choreographic installations’ displayed in the empty gallery spaces as self –standing content, and thus do not animate anything. There is a possibility of adopting the idea of movement activity in the Nigerian context, but with a clearly defined purpose, not movement for movement sake as deduced from Wookey.

With the installation of dance in the museum, today’s museum will be a “theater, a memory palace, a stage for the enactment of other times and places, a space of transport, fantasy, dreams” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p.139). Thus apart from the role of educating the public on cultural values through objects, the museum should also entertain its visitors and Susan Bennett identifies this as the reason for the adoption of ‘performance strategies that evoke different kinds and qualities of experience’ in order to exhibit heritage (2013, p. 5). Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998) looks at how museums have to compete for relevance in the heritage business and compete with other tourist sites, presenting the museums as a tourist attraction in order to be profitable in her book *Destination Cultures*. My six months’ internship with the Smithsonian National Museum of African Arts availed me the opportunity to witness how educators constantly brainstorm on different educational programs to host in the

museum in order to maintain and raise museum patronage as well as stay relevant in the heritage business. Programs were categorized into Films, workshops, performances, Docent-led Tours and workshop series, and this went on monthly with people subscribing to them through eventsbrite. It becomes evident that museums should not rely solely on the ongoing exhibitions but constantly churn out educative and mind stimulating programs that engage all levels of the museum audience in terms of age and interests.

Awuah Eric, a Ghanaian dance scholar, attempts to identify the usefulness of dance performances in the museum as he posits that such performances would help the audience to better relate with certain tangible objects of heritage that are used in the course of the performance. Thus he cites the example of a ritual mask whose significance to the society cannot be deduced from its placement in the museum thereby limiting exploration of the knowledge on its 'physical, emotional, and expressive uses'. However, dance can help with a deeper interpretation of the functionality of the object in a living situation and thus 'dance enables a more comprehensive view of the object' (Awuah, 2016:23)

One of the implications of dance in the museum in Nigeria is the questionable multiplicity of roles with other institutions like the Council for Arts and Culture (CAC), which houses the state dance troupes of each state in Nigeria and is concerned with the preservation and performance of heritage through various artistic expressions including dance. Also both the museum and the Council for Arts and Culture function under the ministry of culture and tourism of each state. It is not enough to belabor the idea of a museum in an African context, like Nigeria, as a western

imposition, without making recommendations on possible ways to help this appropriated culture thrive.

Having been trained as a Heritage manager, I would like to propose some strategies for the museums in Nigeria. One possibility would be for the museum to dramatize the historical stories behind some objects especially those relevant to the present society in Nigeria. A possible way to manage the situation is to establish a collaborative platform between the museum and the state's Council for Arts and Culture. This can be done by employing the services of the Council for Arts and Culture through the Performing Arts department. This dramaturgy can be projected on a screen placed beside the object or room containing objects that it relates to. It is also important to make available texts with details on how a museum object was used in the past and how it can be relevant in a present contemporary Nigerian society (if it is still relevant). Some room should also be given to visitors to put to practice the use of some of these objects thereby creating a sort of audience-object interaction.

Although museum objects are generally treated as delicate and shielded from the touch of visitors as they are placed in transparent glass boxes, the place of touch is important as it helps the visitors with a personalized sensorial experience of the objects that will be lost if the objects are viewed as static and untouchable. This is not to imply that all museum objects can be handled in such way, especially considering the size and weight, therefore, it behooves the museum curators to be discretionary in the choice of objects and also watchfully supervise the activities of visitors. The Smithsonian Museum of African Arts in Washington DC has a room dedication to education collections where objects and artifacts are kept for the use of audience in workshop situations, aiding education during tours especially that of primary and

secondary school students. I was privileged to host a traditional African dance workshop at the museum and certain music/dance related objects were gotten from the education collections of the museum and arraigned for the workshop participants to feel, handle whilst I educated them on the uses of these objects and some information on their history and countries of origin.

In addition to the above, there could be exhibitions specifically addressing dance, choreography, and dance related histories of Nigeria in the museums and such would address both the 'representations of dance, the processes, modes of production, history, economies and conditions of circulations' (Spangberg, 2012). As performance theorist, curator and dance practitioner Marten Spangberg (2012) states, an advantage of dance in the museum is that 'it brings audience and that means ticket sale and that means statistics and that means potentially more subsidy to support more visual art'. It should be noted that Spangberg sees this sarcastically as an advantage to visual arts and museums and not necessarily to the dance, nonetheless, the museum can generate funds to support its management through this. Dance in a museum in Nigeria could possibly alter people's perception of the museum. This probably answers the question posed by French choreographer Boris Charmartz- What do you think dance could do to the museum? What do you think museums will do to dance? (Charmartz, 2011).

Nigeria is a country where the mass media, as well as music and dance, have a great impact on the general public. According to Onuoha Louisa, a staff at the National Museum of Nigeria, Onikan Lagos, 'The media (print and electronic) should be readily available to partner with museums in disseminating information and programmes that would sensitize the people about the museum and its services. This could also encourage people to

visit museums and heritage sites in Nigeria' (Onuoha, 2010). In the spirit of reviving the museum and making it more relevant to the present generation, contemporary Nigerian artists whose works are rooted in the Nigerian cultural heritage could be invited to perform in the museum space. Such artists like Flavourⁱ, Phyno and Liadi Adedayoⁱⁱ also known as Ijodee, These can be done during exhibitions.

This way the museum is meeting the needs of this contemporary society taking into account the cultural heritage of the people. As Coote 2004 states, 'The closer a museum project starts to the local community, the greater the chance of its success' (p. 308). Every exhibition should be advertised on all media platforms. Asides using popular artists in the Nigerian entertainment industry for political propaganda like endorsing candidates for electoral positions, and endorsing certain brands as the best in the commercial sector, the Nigerian government could take advantage of these artists by leveraging on their personality, popularity and ability to connect to the public and have them perform in museum exhibitions. Let the Nigerian museum become a brand that all Nigerians and foreigners would want to be associated with and enjoy a beautiful brand experience.

Professor Abraham Adetakun, a Nigerian sociologist calls for the 'reinvention of our beautiful and glorious practices' through proper cultural management, such that artistic expressions like dance, and poetry, which declined because of 'our romance with foreign religion', will be revived (2011, p. 73). It becomes imperative that the museums in Nigeria should creatively find their place in this space of cultural management. Finally, as Wittlin posits, 'the museum is not an all-purpose nostrum...it should be a fascinating goal to search for the specific, intrinsic contributions these institutions can make to the human wellbeing'. It is only then

that we can answer the question- ‘would we invent museums if we did not have them?’ (Wittlin 2004, p. 56).

Proposed Project

Earlier in this essay, certain strategies were suggested in order to rethink and reinvent museum experience in Nigeria. Thus, this section of the paper is dedicated to situating the achievability of these strategies in a select museum in Nigeria, the Igbo Ukwu museum. This museum is located in Ngor village, Aguata Local Government Area, Anambra state, Nigeria and has been on the scene since 29th December 1989. I have chosen this museum because of its connection to my ethnicity as an Igbo speaking Nigerian. Igbo Ukwu as the name implies could mean ‘great Igbo’ and in the history of Igbo people and the history of civilization, Igbo Ukwu is speculated to be the cradle of civilization, and artworks speculatively dating from 9AD were dug out from the graves of certain elites in that land (TVC, 2013). The history of Igbo people in Nigeria traces their origin to the people of Nri who lived in the present community called Igbo Ukwu. Thus, it became imperative for me to situate this project in the community that birthed my ethnic heritage (Igbonezim, 2015). This museum is faced with certain challenges, like power supply, limited staff, poor maintenance and management both of the museum building and the museum objects, which I have discussed in detail elsewhereⁱⁱⁱ. Below are pictures showing the museum’s state.

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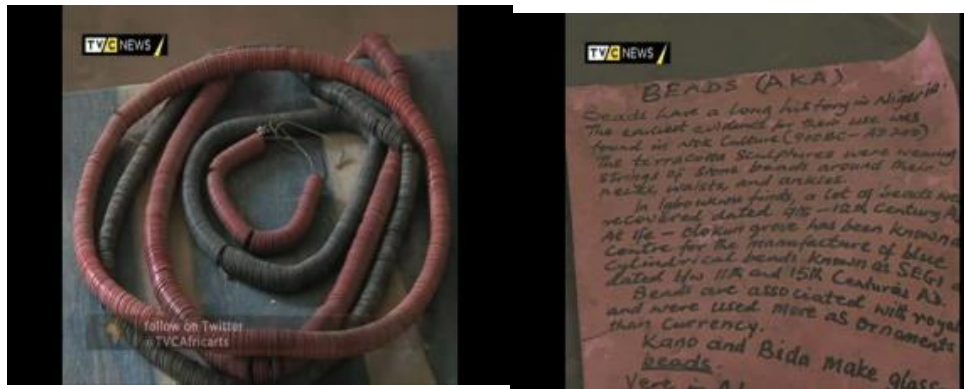
There is no power supply in the vicinity and thus the objects are not properly catered for. They are open to dust and other substances that deteriorate their quality as see in in the picture above.



The museum building is old and rusty with broken ceilings, thus when it rains, it pours down into the museum and objects of high value are affected.



Many descriptions and texts about the museum objects are written on plain paper with a marker and thus can be lost, gets dusty and is



unpleasing and unattractive to the eye. The image of written text beside both pictures above are supposed descriptions of the objects. **Seeing all these, one cannot help but ask; What would motivate a guest to visit this museum? Even if someone visits once, will this sight encourage them to return or even recommend the visit to others? (Igbonezim, 2015)**

Stated below is an excerpt from an online newspaper article written by a culture expert, Preye, in an appraisal of the efforts and achievements of the Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Nigeria.

To promote museums practice, sensitize stakeholders on its importance and capture the attention of policy makers, a series of exhibitions need to be carried out to expose the cultural richness of Nigeria (The Nation, Online, 2015).

Although the Nigeria government and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments have organized several exhibitions to this effect, some of which were held in some European countries and cities in the United States, there is the need to do more at home. It is on this premise that I am proposing the project, *Igboamaka: Performing the Igbo Heritage* in the Igbo Ukwu museum of Nigeria. The aims of this project include;

1. To find a common ground between the past and present and make useful the museum as a place to celebrate both the past and present as well as their symbiotic relationship.
2. To encourage more visitors to the Nigerian museum,
3. To improve the awareness of the relevance of museum to present day society,
4. To call the attention of the government to certain needs of Nigerian museums
5. To develop a platform for museum-audience interaction through the agency of objects, humans and heritage sites in the location (Igbonezim, 2015).

In order to find a common ground between the past and present, it is imperative to see the relationship between the history of the Igbos, their past, with the cultural traits that are still evident today. Certain aspects of Igbo culture have been retained till present day,

even though some contemporary elements have been included. Some of these include the ritual breaking of Kola nuts, pouring libation, traditional marriage ceremonies, the ritual of burial ceremonies especially for traditional rulers and leaders, the new yam festival, masquerading, wrestling and games, Igbo traditional music and dance, folklore, proverbial statements and the Igbo language itself. All these are very rooted in the Igbo history and culture but still find expression in the contemporary Igbo society. However, it is beyond the scope of this essay to go into the details of this past-present relationship of the Igbo culture.

Rethinking the Igbo Ukwu museum will require the renovation of the museum building such that it becomes attractive to visitors both as a tourist site and a house of valued objects that protect and present our heritage. The Igbo Ukwu community is seen to host the celebration of new yam festival which attracts dignitaries of Igbo ethnicity, royal fathers and commoners as well. The new yam festival can be seen as a culmination of most of the above listed cultural traits of the Igbos as it is filled with music, dance, masquerading and many other things associated with the Igbo tradition. The festival usually holds between the month of August and September, lasting for a week. I propose to take advantage of three consecutive days during the festival to execute the Igboamaka project. The events would take place in different locations in the Igbo Ukwu community, culminating at the museum itself. The museums' compound would also be used to stage some performances and certain props used for such performances can be borrowed from the museum especially if they are relevant to the story being told.^{iv}

Since the project is targeted at celebrating the Igbo culture, the involvement and collaboration of all Igbo speaking states through their state government and state troupes would contribute

to its success. Traditional Igbo dances would be performed by different local and state troupes, drama presentations in Igbo language depicting some of the earlier mentioned cultural traits that still find relevance in the contemporary Igbo society. It is a time to involve most of the celebrities of Igbo descent both home and in the diaspora, getting them to openly identify with and celebrate their roots.

The presence of these celebrities would, in turn, attract many visitors. There is also the need for massive publicity on all media platforms for this event. In the area of music, it would be great to have collaborations between renowned age-long Igbo musicians and contemporary young artists who resonate with the Igbo culture in their works, such as Phyno who raps in Igbo language and Queen Theresa Onuoha aka Egedege of Africa. I am not oblivious of the fact that the project would involve funding, but I believe it is achievable and in this way dance can find relevance in the museum. Taking into consideration the present day situation in Nigeria with Igbo people feeling highly marginalized and the call for a Biafra nation, this project is highly significant as it aims to foster the unity and oneness of the Igbo people through the celebration and projection of their cultural heritage. Only after this can one fully write about the realization of a dance and museology collaboration.

Conclusion

I believe dance and museology stand a chance to work together in the rebranding of museums in Nigeria and the awakening of Nigerians on the relevance of the museum. The museums in Nigeria could have room for play houses where drama and dance performances are staged weekly or biweekly to encourage

activities in the museum space. However, it would involve a high level of commitment from the stakeholders in the Heritage sector of Nigeria, the Nigerian government, and artists in the entertainment industry. Apart from showcasing certain dance associated objects in the museum, like dancer's costumes, props, make-up and also video clips of traditional dances in the past and its contemporary evolvment, there is the need for more interactions between the museum space and its located community. Finally, Nigerian museologists need to consider more interdisciplinary collaborations and start thinking outside the box of a museum building.

i End Notes.

- Some of his works include <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IUfM8yTtUc> which dramatizes the traditional marriage rites of contemporary eastern Nigeria and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mXZTTftMeQ> which reflects the politics of choosing a bride for a royal family in some communities in eastern Nigeria. include
- ii He is a prominent Nigerian contemporary dance artist. Some of his works can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noj26FaNI7A&list=PLcrf55VYXkXWEUtPIzdayV3rHIITZlgBM>
- iii I have created a portfolio for this project on my blog which is available at www.igboamaka.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/challenges-of-the-igbo-ukwu-museum/
- iv A similar project has already been embarked on by the Igbo diaspora community in the United States of America organized by the Council of Igbo States in the Americas CISA and hosted by the Frontier Museum of Culture in Staunton Virginia where an erection of a typology of an Igbo village is housed in honor of Igbo slaves that were brought to America and lived in Staunton Virginia.

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