

SUSTAINABLE VISUAL ARTS PRACTICE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A SYNERGETIC APPROACH OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is going through economic turmoil with all hope seems lost because of inability to galvanized capacity to harness the potentials of the nation in terms of human and material resources for her prosperity. This calls for a new thinking outside the norm of a product to other significant products. Visual art practice stands out as an economic booster when properly developed and projected as a culture. Examples abound of other cultures to learn from who have developed practices worthy of emulation of which includes France, China, United Kingdom, Italy, Rome, Greece, Egypt and United states among others. They developed workable systems that both public and private entities thrive on. It is important to note that a synergetic approach option is therefore necessary to developing a viable and sustainable art practices to growing economy. Nigeria has a lot to do in not just looking at oil as major source of income but explore the visual art through encouraging competitive art business practices that can rival others. The economic value of visual art in other climes is recognized as a booster to the economy considering a museum such as Louvre that attracts almost 11million visitors yearly. Tourism promotion in a collaborative approach usually birth movements of people in need of new excitements, areas, locations, businesses which are essential to societal developments. What significant roles then do visual art play in human experience? Understanding the significant roles make us to be appreciative of the value

to economic development of a nation. It is measured in how we domicile business and practice of visual art in a locality. Another is how human emotional intelligence gives them interpretation beyond the visual and translates into innate meanings. This is a convention that ensures it spread culture beyond national boundaries to international acceptance. The consequence is the development of cultural heritages that stem from capacity to achieve a sustainable art practices based on appreciation of different endowments which interrogate human existence in a bid to project it to others.

Key words: Economy, Practice, Significant role, Sustainable art, Synergetic approach, Visual art, Public/Private entities

Introduction

Nigeria's economic development is projected to be on the rise through different sources of undertakings; this has taken the front burner since independence. The economic challenges being confronted with by Nigeria is increasingly requiring new ideas with viable options in the creative industry. Ikwuegbu (2010) shares the view that development of human beings through imaginative and creativity based curricular, provided by the visual arts will help in actualizing human development strategy, rather than focusing on oil, politics and few other glorified areas of human Endeavour's, as it is seen in Nigeria today, though blessed with abundant human and material resources, the country has failed to explore an tap into the wide range of available options that would have salvaged the country from its woes. visual arts is a path to knowledge and self-discovery and should be highly considered as a big avenue for entrepreneurship and economic advancement and should not be looked down upon or relegated as if it doesn't contribute to our economic development. Visual arts, therefore, becomes dynamic and systematic channel to knowledge and could be advanced beyond what it is at the moment to a very strong option in saving our economy.

The visual art culture may look insignificant but has tremendous potentials when harnessed to boosting economic development of any nation. Sustainable Art Practices in other climes have given rise to different aspect of arts and tourism which in most cases developed side by side to enhance their economies, while in Nigeria the focus has not been as such. An example is the Louvre museum in Paris, France, attracting peoples of

different races from all over the world. Its attraction tourists arise from the importance the government of France attached to it as a cultural edifice for preservation of collections of thoughts of men and women, history and culture of peoples.



In 2018, the French formed the largest visitor group (2.5 million), followed by Americans (nearly 1.5 million) and Chinese (nearly 1m). It is said that almost 11million are attracted to visit this edifice yearly.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46748282>. 13/9/2022



The Louvre Abu Dhabi is the first project to open in a series which the United Arab Emirates hope will put the city on the cultural map
Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41919905>. 12/9/2022

The search for items or significant product of economic value is on in Nigeria with her versed human and natural resources. Going back the memory lane when regional governments subsisted in the 60s, development were localized according to available resources from produce. Comparative advantages like groundnuts in the North, palm oil in the East and cocoa in the West were promoted in terms of what they could offer the country called Nigeria by individual regions. Visual artspractices though not considered as a means of generating income nor as one contributing to the growth domestic product (GDP), neither could it leverage as means of funding for developments and for transformation, but has so much to offer. According to Mbahi and Adiwu (2020), the Arts Council of England (2014) reported that in the UK in 2011, art and culture industries created £12.4 billion in aggregate turnover. In 2015, the contribution stood at £27billion and in 2017, £92billion. With the advent of crude oil, it became increasingly difficult to notice the impact visual arts could make in a country where knowledge of it is shallow, demand for it were mostly by those few exposed privileged individuals, and training in visual arts is relegated in its entirety.

According to Ogunmola (2006), art is often considered as the highest form of human expression, it is of great importance in education and thus helping the individual to fit into society. Considering materials end art provides for the society, art can be used in the most commercial fashion to promote and sell variety of products and to advertise religious programmes.

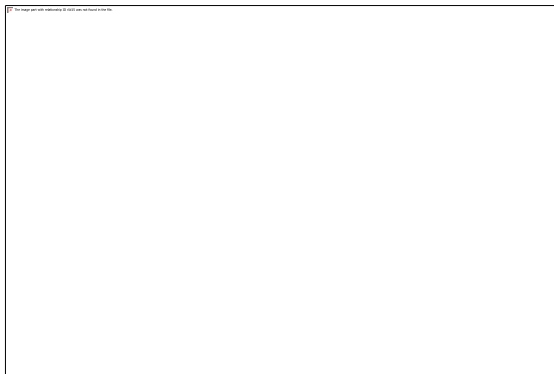
Art plays a meaningful role in developing and changing a dynamic child who becomes increasingly aware of himself and his environment (Ajayi, 1985). According to Ogunmola (2006), art is often considered as the highest form of human expression, it is of great importance in education and thus helping the individual to fit into society. Considering materials end art provides for the society, art can be used in the most commercial fashion to promote and sell variety of products and to advertise religious programmes.

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Art plays a meaningful role in developing and changing a dynamic child who becomes increasingly aware of himself and his environment (Ajayi, 1985). It is important to note that there are different kinds of sustainable art practices worldwide which has impacted on how we do things for the general well-being of mankind. These practices have been sustained based on understanding of their direction on various societal issues, the roles it plays in drawing attention to certain areas requiring necessary action to mitigate the tide for a change. For instance, Land art movements started in the 1960s, mostly a site-specific beyond the gallery spaces. According Hodge (2011), most Land art originated out of concern for the environment and explorations of the relationships between human and their natural surroundings is often one of the main objectives. Contemporary art practices of a kind expresses itself through communicating the thoughts of the creator to the beholder, among others are;

- It creates a narrative about social change
- Political upheaval and commentary
- Environmental degradation and renewal
- Historical symbolic images
- Critical satirical ideas



Spiral Jetty by Robert Smithson, 2005

It is said to be one of the famous land art of earthwork in existence till date with all the materials gotten from same environment.

The land art movement is rooted most strongly in the United States, especially in the deserts of the west. Earthworks also proved remarkably popular in England. Artists in other countries around the world have also dabbled in earth art, but the US and the UK are considered the two most prominent hubs for this particular artistic discipline.

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-land-art-definition/29/9/2022>

What is Visual Art?

Visual Art is a fundamental component of the human experience reflecting the world and the time in which we live. Art can help us understand our history, our culture, our lives, and the experience of others in a manner that cannot be achieved through other means. It can also be a source of inspiration, reflection, and joy.

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/importance-of-visual-art>

Our understanding of what visual art meant could help to evaluate the contribution to transforming economic landscape of Nigeria. Historically, we know where we are coming from, where we are and going to build the future. Our daily experiences is always reflected in contemporary visual art by artists directly and indirectly which is delineated along real, abstracted and quasi-abstractation. Each of these contraption reflect issues of human values and culture.

Economic value of Visual art

Visual art cannot be underestimated in its economic value. It has been viewed as money spinning with high record sales of art pieces of some Nigerian artists in recent auctions in and outside Nigeria. It then means there is so much yet to be harnessed from training, promotion to marketing. The economy of visual arts is gradually emerging and is going through different stages of growth. The art space is becoming packed with lots of funds exchanging hands and not yet explored to the fullest. Certain nations around the globe are investing into visual arts in term of creating enabling environment for thriving of art business.

The impact in Nigeria has been insignificant because of lack of adequate funding both by public and private sector interventions. Galleries are mainly private interventions with practically no public funding. They are

established to sell and promote visual art in and outside Nigeria. The main actors in promotion of visual art in Nigeria have been doing their bits but not able to significantly breakthrough with record sales for artists as expected at the international arena. The economic value of visual art is reflected in its capacity to train people to be self-reliant and become employers of labour.” This is very imperative because the visual art sector is very key to achieving economic growth; visual artists that allow them to be properly trained and grounded in the practical aspects of visual art are more likely not to look for Government so called white collar jobs because of the great potentials on engaging their skills for entrepreneurship and productive venture that will empower the teaming population by creating various avenues for creating wealth and source of livelihood. The freedom and explorative nature of visual art discipline, helps visual artists stumble on a wide range of creative products that can be translated into money making opportunities, thereby promoting self-reliance in the Nigerian economy.

Mwantok (2016) noted that as a core part of the creative industry, visual art is an embodiment of fields that provide the everyday needs of Nigerians. Emphasizing that graphic art as an example of an aspect of visual arts that deals with production of designs for the purpose of visual communication. Also mentioned is textile and fashion design. “With the drive to elevate tourism as one of the alternative income earning strategies for the nation, the textile and fashion design industry definitely has a crucial role to play. Since clothing is an essential human need, the demand for fabrics and attires is certainly a never-ending one. Generally, in the Nigerian economy today, graphic design, printing, photography, painting, sculpture, textile and fashion design, ceramics and other aspects of the creative industry, are all avenues for self-employment. Adding, that at a time when poverty reduction is demanding a significant attention from the government, visual arts provides a viable option if properly applied and harnessed to solving the challenge of diversifying the nation’s economy.

Oyedemi (2020) avers that,

The projections of the art market sales may have fallen below expectations of many dealers and galleries in Nigeria. This has not in any way lead to closing of shops/businesses of majors like Signature, Mydrim, Terra-kulture , Alexis, Quintessence and many

others despite the recession. Auction house especially Arthouse Contemporary Ltd has also fared well.

Investment opportunities

The visual Art provides possible options one could invest in, people most times look into investments in bonds and shares, Theses Avenue are good but can easily be affected by unstable economic fluctuations of Stocks. Adams (2023) noted that Art collecting and investment is no longer limited to the wealthy elite. He emphasized that if youre interested in Art, then you can diversify your assets and even find something nice to hang on your wall. At the very least, your investment will look alot better than a stock certificate. He added that no matter what the financial markets are doing, moving up or trending down, the art market isn't affected very much. While both stocks and bond are were declining in the first half of 2022, art auctions were setting new record prices.

New investments are propping up in the contemporary visual art in Nigeria. More art galleries are coming in to promote and sell visual art in and outside Nigeria, playing roles requiring synergetic approach considering the economy around the business. Some of these galleries are Alexis galleries, Signature Beyond, Arthouse, Nike cultural centre, Red Door, Mydrim, Thought Pyramid Art Centre, Orisun Art Gallery and many other players. In a recent outing of a Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi (1989), as at 2018, the prices of his paintings were below #1,000,000m per piece, but has risen to almost \$200,000 at auctions. It was reported that other artists profile from this part of the world are already on the rise for record prices. According to report from an auction house;

Oluwole Omofemi's work has been offered at auction multiple times, with realized prices ranging from 3,876 USD to 189,000 USD, depending on the size and medium of the artwork. Since 2020 the record price for this artist at auction is 189,000 USD for Invader, sold at Christie's New York in 2022.

Source-<https://www.mutualart.com/Artist/Oluwole-Omofemi/A6FCF6F5DB686E30> 13/9/2022

Developing local economy

Local economy developed by private and public entities is of utmost importance to meaningful and successful sustainable visual art practices. It gives direction to entrepreneurship that are geared towards business activities resulting into wealth distribution for a locality. What are the economic opportunities for investment in contemporary visual art in Nigeria? Drawing from the examples of cultural practices of other advanced economies, it is very important to adopt a strategy that makes visual art to thrive on the basis of its capacity to attract tourists and generate the needed foreign investments. This is based on comparative advantages in practices which can help in developing local economy of the locality where they are found.

The visual Arts and culture-related industries provide direct economic growth to the local economy by complimenting development of a locality or region thereby enriching the status of the locality. Visual art create job opportunities and also stimulates local economies through consumer purchases and tourism. Tourism centered on culture and arts contribute greatly to state economic growth by providing attracting revenues if public and private sectors synergize to promote its cause. This is because the visual art sector has the potentials of attracting talented and skilled workers to participate and form a productive workforce.

Synergetic approach in sustainable visual art practices

This approach may be adaptable to developing and driving the growth of sustainable art practice in Nigeria. It is very import to note that synergy construct plays a major role in bringing different actors together in a creative environment to contribute to attaining sustainable goals. The government represents the public, while individuals' participation exemplify the private creating enabling environment for the thriving of sustainable art practice. Public-private partnerships with the visual art industries will increase their capacity to develop a creative workforce that will promote a sustainable visual art practice that will greatly tackle economic development by way of providing avenues and platform that will propel self reliance and job creation. Stewart (2019) observed that many local –levels successes suggests that such strategies are promising since they provide technical assistance in areas such as planning and marketing. This fosters significant growth in the country's cultural sector. Visual Arts and industries are economic assets if properly harnessed by both public and

private sectors because of its ability and capacity to provide jobs and revive our local economies through tourism and consumer purchase of Art items. Stewart (2016) noted that art and culture industry has the potential of providing the local economy some benefits such as: attracting tourism, as audiences drawn to arts and cultural events not only spend money on the arts but contribute to the local economies by patronizing other sectors within the local communities thereby helping weak economic aspects of the local economy.

1. Private funding intervention (Museum and Gallery)

This is private initiative of individuals and group of persons who built and establish centers for the promotion of visual art in Nigeria. They committed enormous funds set up outfit like museums and art galleries where artists practice in residencies, sell, and meet with art connoisseurs and show their talents in an exhibition to the world.

According **Glimcher(2022)**, the primary purpose of an art gallery is to nurture visual artists, promote their work, and expose them to the public, collectors, media, and cultural institutions. Furthermore, the gallery works tirelessly and strategically to advance the artists' careers and establish them in the professional art world both locally and globally.

a. Museum



The Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Arts, Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria. Image by YSMA

Source; <https://globalvoices.org/2022/07/29/exploring-nigerias-yemisi-shyllon-museum-of-arts/>

The Yemisi Shyllon museum is a private initiative built at Pan Atlantic University, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos. Visiting the edifice some time in 2020, in company of a gallerist and another artist leaves one with the impression of love for the visual art. This goes to show that whatever one conceives, with commitment, it is attainable. The museum is 900sqm housing donations of 1000 artworks by the initiator Prince Omooba Yemisi Shyllon and other artists. It is believed to be the first largest purpose built privately owned art museum in Nigeria.

b. Gallery space



Nike art gallery, Lekki, Lagos

Nike art centre is arguable the biggest gallery and with the largest collections of contemporary visual art in Nigeria. It is always said that the gallery has a collection of between 7000-10000 pieces of art, sculpture, painting, textiles, graphics, prints and many other items inform of fashion accessories and books. The center was founded by Nike Davies-Okundaye, who grew up steeped in her family's culture of textile making, dyeing, weaving, and painting. She's credited with teaching thousands of young Nigerian artists over the last 40 years, as well as providing exhibition space for showing works. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/nike-centre-for-art-and-culture>

2. Public intervention/participation

Public intervention has basically been on the part of government funding by building enabling environment. It establishes agencies that are saddled with the responsibilities of promotion and directing viable art practices in Nigeria. Public funds were used to erect edifices to house national collections and valuable pieces at national theatre, museum and with exhibition spaces created for artists use.

a. National theatre



Source:https://www.culturalheritageonline.com/location-2866_Teatro-Nazionale-Nigeriano-delle-Arti---National-Arts-Theatre-.php 13/9/2022

National theatre, Lagos, Nigeria is the biggest public funding of its kind which was initiated by the then military head of state, General Yakubu Gowon in 1973 as a multipurpose cultural Centre to host several activities at same time. It was eventually opened by the next head of state Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo in September 30th, 1975 and was used for FESTAC 77. It houses the national gallery of modern art permanent exhibition of visual art apart from other functions. This is the biggest public cultural institution to date with such a magnificent structure in Nigeria.

b. National Museum



National museum, Onikan Lagos.

<https://www.nigeriagalleria.com/29/9/2022>

National museum was established in 1957 to house historic relics and artifacts from different parts of Nigeria especially the Nok terra cotta, Bronze from Benin and Ife and many archeological treasures and other art pieces of importance.

Requirements for sustainable art practice

There are different ways of looking at sustainable art practice depending on the importance attached to it. The major requirements are funding in terms;

- Access to credit or lending platforms, grants, loans
- Patronage
- Promotions
- Technology
- Synergetic approach-private and public

The visual artists are in the best position to champion the course of visual Art in Nigeria by making their role prominent rather than sitting at the background. This can be advocated through their professional bodies such as the Society for Nigerian Artists (SNA), and others while the government should create a favourable and thriving environment that will promote and guaranty entrepreneurial potentials of visual art practice. Both government and private sectors should synergize and take conscious measures by enacting policies that will make visual art practice fashionable through reflecting the usefulness and economic importance of visual art practice and adopting strategies that support and strengthen the creative industries, By so doing, the country will reap numerous benefits that will help

generate stable and a more economic and viable country. It is noted that sustainable art practices has not attracted credits like other sectors of the economy. Therefore it is recommended that artists should be giving opportunities to access lending platforms as a way of boosting visual art practices for economic development. Promotions in and outside Nigeria through public and private partnerships will enhance the interest, training and practice of art as an enterprise. There is the need for sectoral data base to assess the contribution of contemporary visual art in transforming Nigeria. This will give a picture of its attendant economic importance as a cultural enterprise. Finally, visual art culture should be promoted to consumer preference product of choice in an emerging economy like Nigeria.

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