AN ANALYSIS OF UNCONVENTIONAL MATERIALS USED FOR ART EXPRESSION BY NINE (9) SELECTED NIGERIAN ARTISTS

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P13EVFA9005

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,

ZARIA, NIGERIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.) DEGREE IN ART HISTORY

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS,

FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNMENT,

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DECLARATION

This research thesis entitled *An Analysis of Unconventional Materials for Art Expression Used by Nine (9) Selected Nigerian Artists* is written by me in the Department of Fine Arts. Sources of information obtained and used for this study have been duly recognized and acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. To the best of my knowledge, I, NYOHOM BAYERO FWANGKES, hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been presented for another degree at any university.

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CERTIFICATION

The Research, entitled, *An Analysis of Unconventional Materials for Art Expression used by Nine (9) Selected Nigerian Artists,* written by NYOHOM BAYERO FWANGKES satisfies the guidelines, governing the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Art History of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to God Almighty for giving me the opportunity, despite obvious difficulties encountered in the course of this study, to finish the programme. I dedicate the work to my wife, Margaret; my children: Kenret, Benshak, Gufwang and Nanbam, for their depth of understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Admitting God's timing, I wish to acknowledge the inexhaustible patience, support and guidance of my supervisors, Prof. A. R. Saliu, Prof. J. Jari and Prof. R. A. Nkom. Out of their schedules, they took interest in my work and stood by me when the study appeared insurmountable. Their guidance was all that I needed to bring the work to reality.

I thank all my lecturers and my colleagues in the Department of Fine Arts for their advice and encouragement. I also thank my employer, Federal College of Education, Pankshin, for all the cooperation and encouragement I received.

My special acknowledgement also goes to my family friends: Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Bukar; Mr. and Mrs. K. S. Damden; Mr. and Mrs. Gujahar, and others whose names are not mentioned here.

Finally, I acknowledge the contributions of the artists I studied. The research work would not have been a reality without the materials they provided for the study. To all, remain blessed.

ABSTRACT

Since the revolution earlier started with the emergence of the Renaissance in Europe, new ideas of art creation, kept evolving as artists continued to show dissatisfaction with state-of-the-art expression. The plethora of media for art expression spread beyond the boundaries of Europe. More explorations and experiments kept intensifying, leading to discoveries and inventions of other materials and techniques with the hope to present art forms that express something better than previous creations. Different movements were formed in line with their different ideologies. In the early 20th century, Western artists like Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso appropriated found objects as creative devices. People were shocked seeing those kinds of art creation. The first and the second World Wars witnessed radical use of waste in art expression. Transforming of waste and found objects into works of art not only shows the boundless powers of human imagination, but also exposes the innate creative potentials that such materials possess. In Africa, various artists like El Anatsui, Dilomprizulike, Alex Nwokolo, among others, have critically engaged waste and found objects as viable media for artistic expression. Groups like Bruce Onokbrapeya Foundation (BOF), Art is Everywhere Project, among many, have organized seminars and workshops to sensitize the public not only on the creative possibilities of unconventional materials, but also on the use of found objects imbued with art works with peculiar aesthetics, which make profound visual statements. The artists understudy, were individually motivated by nature and their different models, but further acquired more skills and experiences through explorations and experimentations. The choice of unconventional materials and the techniques used by each of them for their art creations were marks of creative independence attained by each of the artists. Most of their expressions were in the areas of paintings, sculptures, installation arts, and mixed media exploration. Each of the works displays exquisite expression, revels reinvention of new context. and ideation. Given the growing global concerns on environmental degradation and climate change, the transformation of waste and found objects into works of art imbued with new meaning is an important avenue for having a sustainable environment. The artists derived different levels of satisfaction for using the materials. This informed their courage and continuous creations in materials and techniques that are unequaled. Based on the findings made after the analysis, one of the major recommendations is the early exposition of students to the aesthetic potentials of unconventional materials, preferable when they are still quite young. It is believed that they will grow up to value the creative potentials inherent in the materials. Artists should always seek out new challenges in order to task their creative skills, harness their uncertainty and fuel their brilliant concepts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Art expression in term of materials has experienced levels of changes as a result of the revolution earlier started with the emergence of Renaissance Art in Europe. The rise of the rich middle class, alongside people of means, supported scholarship. The initial method of acquiring knowledge in art creation was through apprenticeship. Young aspiring artists received the skills in the studios of established artists. Apprenticeship as a system faded out with time. Schools being accepted as means of massive enlightenment started springing up in different parts of Europe. Saxton (1981) notes that the first formal art school in the west was established in 1562 in Florence, Italy, while in England, the Royal Academy was established in 1768. By the eighteenth century, schools in Europe had increased to a hundred. The author notes that irrespective of where the art school was located, the emphasis was the need to stimulate the creativity of the individuals. The focus was the development of the full imaginative potential of the aspiring artists by exposing them to a wide range of media.

Explorations and experiments led to diversification of the media of expression. Colour as a medium, for instance, with its different attractions to artists, occupied a commanding position for the diversity in their individual expressions. The shades of colours in their varieties were made to change and shift about in the quest by artists for greater dynamic unity. Variety further offers different approaches in order to gain more satisfaction. The desire for satisfaction was later extended to other media of expression. De la Croix and Tansey (1980), having assessed the periodical changes, state thus:

> *For Europe, the nineteenth century was an age of radical change during which the modern world took shape. In a world experiencing a population explosion of unprecedented magnitude, revolution follows upon revolution, punctuated by counter-revolution and conservative reactions ... The revolutionary shakeups of authority reverberate through the century, carrying the hope of people for something newer, better, truer, and purer.*

As search for fresh media and concepts to effect the change in expression was intensified, Reid (1975), notes that some artists explored and experimented extensively and the outcome of the explorations and experimentations was the exhibition of diversity on their works. For instance, in 1786, one of the leading Neo-Classicist painters, John Zoffany, came out with a completely different type of literary illustration titled "Charles Macklin as Shylock", a portrait study of an actor playing a part on the stage.

The range of art creation was expanding by the development of other more peculiar types of art expression. By combining industrial and scientific subjects on one composition to achieve the contrast effect of light, Joseph Wright of Derby's "Experiment with the Air-Air Pump" was a compelling art piece. In 1848, when Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed by Holman Hunt and his colleagues, the author observes that the group felt dissatisfied with the state of the art in England because it seemed to lack vigour, sincerity and seriousness. This became obvious when the works were put in contrast with the quality of the art in Italy and northern Europe before the time of Raphael. The artists attributed the weakness to neglect of nature and over-dependence, instead, on academic conventions. To address this, they initiated "a child-like" reversion from existing schools to nature herself. The artists displayed differing interests by evolving different media and techniques of art expression which changed the face of art expression in England. This was as a result of Holman Hunt's insistence on remarkable powers of observation and pictorial invention.

The emergence of Impressionists and the Post-Impressionists in the art scene witnessed the exhibition of the most recent of the series of masterpieces of paintings from the thirteenth to

the nineteenth century. Their paintings, whose focus was to find a new truth, were derided, hated or ignored purely on moral grounds. The artists deliberately evolved diversification and innovation in the process of their art creation. This accelerated art in the way that is comparable with the rate in the fields of science and technology. Cezanne, for example, spent years working in isolation appropriating different media in order to reconcile his perceptions with the relationships of touches of colour on the flat picture surface. The artist, through experiment, understood that the appearance of objects change as the eye moves over and around it. This was largely because of the media and techniques he devised to integrate the picture-surface so that all the shapes on it were made to relate to one another, which consequently led to Cubism, an abstract art of the century. Gauguin, another artist, turned against the rationalism and materialism of his period and went to live in Tahiti, where he was moved by the simplicity and mystery of the way of life of the peasants and natives. The artist tried to find an equivalent to this in his diverse painting. Another artist who evolved improvisations in his art production was Rodin. He strived to give his forms new freedom, sometimes bridging them in space.

A group of painters (Henri Matisse, Andre Derain, and Albert Marquet, among many) came together and staged an exhibition in 1905. The artists was named *fauves* (wild beasts) because of their approaches. The painters rejected traditional rendering of three-dimensional space defined by colours. They used vivid, non-naturalistic and exuberant media. Colours, raw from the tubes, were applied and forms were aggressively manipulated to the point of distortion. The work from Henri Matisse titled “Woman with the Hat” is a typical example of the characteristics of the works of the Fauvists. Their works displayed at an exhibition were appalling to the viewers and were subjected to mockery and abuse at the time. Henri Matisse developed an entirely new approach to art expression in terms of art materials and

techniques when he was ill. Different shapes of colours were cut from papers and coloured in gouache. These were pasted on a ground by assistants under his watch. An example of this is the work titled “L’Escargot”, produced and exhibited in 1953.

In his study, Stokstad (1995) notes that Pablo Picasso joined a group of young writers and artists, interested in progressive art and politics. He also gathered experiences from other artists because of his frequent visits to their studios. In 1912 Pablo Picasso was pre-occupied with creating works with more clearly-discernible materials. The approach led to what was later known as “Synthetic Cubism”, particularly the work titled “Glass and Bottle of Suze”, composed of separate elements pasted together. At the centre of the composition is the combination of newsprint and construction arrangement of paper cut to suggest a tray or round table upon which are glass and a bottle of liquor. The author observes that this approach of art rendition was carried to the point of complete abstraction, although a few allusions to objects still remained. Pablo Picasso’s compositions started showing flat planes being replaced by other flat materials. His focus was shifted to composing works with machines and machine-made objects.

Cubism as a movement stimulated other similar movements. Prominent among these, was Futurism, founded in Italy by a poet, Marinetti. Reid (1975), states that unlike other previous movements, Futurism was propagandised in words, as well as in paintings and sculpture materials. The artists of this movement created works with the sole aim of destroying the art of the past which was seen as oppressive to the young artists, especially in Italy. The Futurists hoped to substitute a new art based on speed, violence and machines. The artists were deliberately and aggressively revolutionary in the use of materials and techniques. They took materials from Pointillism and, much later, from Cubism, where they came up with multiple images in one composition.

Radical approach to art creation was witnessed during the World Wars when some Swiss artists under the Dada Art Movement sought to overturn what they regarded as "outworn aesthetic standard". The group individually appropriated large portions of unconventional materials for art creation. They believed that art could be made of anything, even rubbish (Reid, 1975). Gradually, the excitement that was expressed by the public at the emergence of the movement lost its power to shock any longer. Other Dada artists like Max Ernst and Ben Nicholson exploited the environment and came out with materials as mugs, jugs and bottles as suitable materials which they used for their art expression. According to Getlein (2002) the artists loved these materials because of their simplicity and the fact that they were well known to everyone and could be understood from a simple profile. Artists continued their search for the best means of expression as best as they could. For instance, a French painter, Jean Dubuffet, developed a very different but distinct form of art expression. His art creation was inspired by what he called "Art Brut" (raw art), where materials of uncommon backgrounds were mixed with tar, sand, and mud and manipulated to produce works.

The tempo of radical changes in Europe and America opened up a modern epoch in art creations. Artists from Europe who settled in America because of the World Wars continued the quest for new concepts, materials, and techniques. New York School played a major role in the emergence of new concepts of art expression in America and beyond. For instance, Jackson Pollock, one of the outstanding abstract Expressionists, rejected much of the European art tradition of aesthetic refinement for cruder and rougher materials, an approach akin to Jean Dubuffet of France except for their materiality.

Gina (2007), states that where there is an idea, there is a way to express it (irrespective of which part of the world the artist is coming from). To do this, artists exploited the

environment and created art out of non-regular materials just to portray their love for art and the skills employed in its expression. For instance, Anastasia Elias used toilet paper rolls to create miniature scenes of life. In a similar development, Erika Irish Simmons liked to gather and preserve old technology such as cassette tapes that were no longer being used. She used these unconventional materials to create popular celebrity portraits. Stanislav Aristov from Russia used burnt matchsticks and bent them to his desired shapes before editing photographs of them via Photoshop, where delightful scenes were created. In another development, old watch parts were the most suitable materials used by Susan Beatrice to create steam punk sculpture. She mainly used recycled parts which coincided with her love for nature. Another innovative artist was Kseniya Simonova, who used sand to create animated stories. From the pile of sand, the artist could push, rub and pinch sand into accents that translated into beautiful depictions. Paul Vilinski is another visual artist that used discarded materials such as beer cans to bring out his artwork in meaningful poetic ways. The artist's concern for environment issues can be seen in his works, as he often used recycled materials, giving them new breaths of life as art pieces.

Grant (2009) observes that with the introduction of new materials, the admixture of the materials and the fair number of exploration, as well as experimentations by artists, fresh reasons for new art movements were being stimulated. The author stressed further that artists were in search of unique and best materials and techniques to express themselves, and to communicate with the public. The new discoveries and inventions accelerated the pace of art redefinition and development as newer and better media of expressions kept coming to limelight.

The impact of the artistic transformation went beyond the boundaries of Europe. This was first felt in the regions colonized by the individual European countries. This became

possible because of the relationships established through the policy of colonization. The non-European world began witnessing inflows of cultures strange to them. Gradually, the western nations established their kinds of values in these territories. The world started witnessing the interpretation of artistic issues from a western world view point. In Africa, for example, and especially in Nigeria, one fact that seems settled is that the European style of art expression as known today evolved with Aina Onabolu (1882-1963), who not only excelled, but who also carved a niche for himself in pioneering art education in the country. It is observed that before 1910, not much was going on in terms of modern (European technique) art expression in the West African sub-region. Before then, Nigerians were creating purely indigenous arts, free of influence by any outside art-making ideas. Works interlaced with the basic materials to create art used as a vehicle to convey spiritual concerns for survival (Egonwa 1994).

Babalola (2004) notes that Nigeria has a flourishing art history, and that before Onabolu could venture into the European art expression, he had interacted with, and was used to, the types of forms in Nigeria, as art was highly appreciated by the Nigerian people. Also, Babalola posits that Onabolu knew that the Europeans did not believe in the art of the people. Nonetheless, he was not deterred, but was committed and determined, to reproduce the works as he saw them. This success ended the initial error held by Europeans that no African person was capable of producing the kind of art works created by them. Onabolu's effort earned him a scholarship to read art in England and France. At the end of his study, he did not only excel as a painter par excellence, but carved a niche for himself.

When Onabolu returned from studying overseas, Art was introduced to be taught in schools alongside other subjects. Despite initial difficulties faced as a result of lack of teachers, Onabolu was determined to succeed by moving from one school to the other to be

personally involved in the teaching. Grillo in Ikpakronyi (2003) notes that Aina Onabolu had sacrificed so much for the survival of the subject when states thus:

> *The period of inertia was during the period of Onabolu. Nobody appreciated what he was doing. He was going from school to school teaching and getting almost nothing and trekking from place to place. He lived more or less as a pauper. Well, relatively he didn't have much and he died more or less just like a school teacher. His works of course are now being appreciated.*

The initiative by Aina Onabolu and those who later worked with him (Kenneth Murray, H. E. Duckwork, Dennis Duerden and J. D. Clarke), and the impact they made, perhaps prompted Konate (2004) to refer to them as "instrumental figures". This feat marked the official use of conventional and academic European materials, techniques and styles of executing art works in Nigerian schools. The combined efforts of these art teachers produced budding and talented artists like J. D. Akeredolu, Akinola Lasekan, C. C. Ibeto, Ibrahim Uthman, A. P. Umana and Ben Enwonwu. These artists individually made their distinct landmarks in the propagation of visual arts. Aina Onabolu, however, apparently dominated the contemporary Nigerian art scene for about two decades from the 1920s to the 1940s, and he continued to dominate until his death in 1963. Today, he is generally not only regarded as the father of modern art and art education in Nigeria, but he lit the torch for a dynamic contemporary art in modern Nigeria. The subject was further strengthened, when Ben Enwonwu (1921-1994) who graduated from Slade School of Art in London, was appointed the Federal Art Advisor. He, like Aina Onabolu, was exceptionally talented and committed. He initiated and introduced a new concept (which was later known as natural synthesis) in his art expression. He dominated the Nigerian landscape with innovative works for about a decade (Babalola, 2004).

The first set of students in the persons of Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Bruce Onobrakpeya and others, were admitted into the Nigerian Collage of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria

(now Ahmadu Bello University) in 1957. Art courses were made professional, based entirely on the conventional academics of the European approach. Ikpakronyi (2009) notes that the Europeans formed the bulk of the teaching staff and the programme came into real focus. The students who were not satisfied with the European style of expression sought to discontinue with the conventional approach. They gradually continued to distance themselves from the Western artistic concepts and historical experiences that were alien to them. They felt the need to create an identity to the African artists. Those who spearheaded the desire for the change included Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, among others. On what appears to be a justification for the step they took, Onobrakpeya (2003), one of the frontiers of the Zarianists, states that the whole idea behind their activities was to save Nigerian civilization and to salvage the personality of her people from the inferiority complex which was the outcome of colonialism. He singled out Uche Okeke, who had experience in the documentation and collection of folk art pieces, as their leader and states thus:

> *With his background, we were not surprise that Uche became the leader the now famous society while still at the college. The members of the society were guided by the synthesis concept, he advanced. Synthesis was recourse to the root of our timeless values, which should be married to equal good foreign values… It was in short, to create a rich artistic presence and a hopeful future. As the Zaria Art Society left the college and dispersed to different parts of Nigeria and abroad, the Synthesis Theory became cardinal in their practice as painters, sculptors, teachers, media artists etc. This widespread new artistic energy created a new renaissance, with respect to the artist and the art in general.*

Uche Okeke confirms their instructors' relegated Nigerian cultural values to the background. He affirmed his leadership position of the Zaria Art Society when he also states thus:

> *I was myself a member of the Zaria Art Society and its chairman from 1958 to 1961,…when most of its founding members graduated…The majority of our instructors were British or British trained and we students opposed to the system of teaching art subjects that ignored Nigerian cultural values,*

> *restricted their method of imparting art knowledge and their preoccupation with the study of nature, which in our view, was superficial.*

When the Zaria Art Society was formed, the group used to meet formally and informally to discuss the socio-cultural existence of the creative artists in the throes of change. Again, the leader (Uche Okeke) in an interview granted Chika Okeke on the 31st August 1997 stated, "We wanted to show Nigerian art and also have a distinct Nigerian character rather than posturing as colonial transplant." In another development, Oshinowo (2008), notes that the formation of the Zaria Art Society was founded on a profound desire for political freedom. He believes the formation fuelled the spirit of individualism in all members, and also infused in their minds national consciousness and cultural pride. The author explains further that the spirit of individualism culminated into a synthesis of indigenous and Western ideas.

The philosophy of natural synthesis was intensified, which later influenced almost all succeeding generations of Nigerian artists and their art creations. Perhaps the doggedness of the students in creating new consciousness, which ushered in what Filani in Konate (2004), refers to as "New African". In his study of the works of the graduates, Oloidi (2009) observes that the pioneering students had acquired aggressive artistic radicalization of the Zaria revolutionaries between 1958 and 1961. He observes that it prepared the foundation for a solid artistic standard in modern Nigerian art.

Generations of artists keep expanding the boundaries of art expression as they seek new vocabularies, materials, and techniques that enable them address new concerns. Diarra (2017) contends that Africa's art scene is characterized by innovation and conceptual profundity which has paved way for the next generation. Materials of different backgrounds are used to create works to interpret and portray the society's socio-economic realities, political challenges, rich tradition and diverse beauty. For instance, the Zaria Art Society

advocated Natural Synthesis for Art Expression which was a fusion of African motifs, concepts and techniques with Western ideas (Ekpo, 2010). This concept led to other experiments that developed with time. Individual artists over the years have appropriated different unconventional material and techniques to express their feelings. Explorations and experiments, earlier started in Zaria, brought radical reformation in art expression in Nigeria. Nwoko's sculptural work with other artists of the Zaria Art Society caught the attention of other contemporary Nigerian visual artists, who appropriated relevant materials to address issues of the moment. Worthy of note is the Nigerian civil war, one sad event that inspired artists with the Zaria Art Society members, particularly from the Eastern part of the country (such as Uche Okeke, Obiora Uchechukwu, Chike Aniakor) who used their creative abilities to react to the avoidance and the waste of the war.

Sowole (2013) observes that Alex Nwokolo metamorphosed from the use of one medium to the other in his quest to be unique. The years of experiments in different media like Jean Dubuffet of France, has made his art expression stronger. The author sees Alex Nwokolo among the generation of Nigerian artists who have transited from one radical media to the other, yet is still making impact. Sowole quotes Nwokolo thus:

> *The desire for change and the need to have a global perspective in my art instigated a stimulus for this current direction in the evolution of my work. The new experiment and materials offered me yet another opening to contribute to an existing international calligraphy…and media derived from everyday socio-cultural signs and symbolism, where elements are assembled and dissected on to a surface resulting in a hybrid painting and sculpture.*

In 1990, some young artists who christened themselves as *Nogh-Nogh Art Group*, a group which included Danjuma Kefas, Babalola Tunde, Ayo Aina, Lasisi Lamidi, among others, from the Fine Arts Department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria became worried because of the attitude of the public towards the types of artworks created by them, as they mostly

appropriated unconventional materials found in the environment. The group is experimental in nature, and has embarked on organizing periodic workshops, seminars and exhibitions of their works, with participants coming from all over the country. The peculiar nature of their art creations attracted sympathy from other members of the community. Most of those who shared in their ideology joined them in their regular meetings (Jari, 1994). It was in one of the meetings that the group adopted the name *Nogh-Nogh Art Movement.* The word "Nogh-Nogh" is a derivation from the Nupe language, and means "nonsense" (Jari 1994). According to Danjuma (2002) one of the leaders of the movement, stated that from inception the movement has always had unconventionality as its main goal. As the movement kept growing, other goals such as creation of forums for discussion, and for the propagation of the works of the members, were developed. Different found objects were adopted by the participants in their art creations. This policy of freedom of expression adopted by the movement has not only popularized the movement, but also attracted more members. Members are further encouraged to appropriate materials and styles they think can best express their feelings, and it did not seek to influence the adaptation of a particular approach by its members. The group encourages simplicity of materials in all aspects of its operation. Danjuma (1994) in his assessment of the activities of the group, contends that their activities have positive effects on the artistic thinking of people who have come into contact with them.

Another artist known for his experimental work in various materials within Nigeria and beyond is the Ghanaian born sculptor, El Anatsui, who resides in Nigeria. Angie (2017) and Diarra (2017) have individually written and alluded that El Anatsui is one of Africa's most influential mixed-media artist, although he was trained as a sculptor. The artist has spent much time in Nigeria, teaching at the University of Nigeria Nssuka. He uses different

unconventional materials as he could find them suitable and makes exquisite objects of stunning visual impact. More recently, El Anatsui turned to installation and more complex sewing techniques, which enable him to create art using unconventional materials like liquor bottle caps and discarded pieces of metals for his large-scale assemblage art.

A Non-Governmental Organization striving hard to increase and develop the creative abilities of artists in Nigeria is the Bruce Onokbrakpeya Foundation (BOF). It is an artist-led organization formed in 1985, with a mission to engender the growth of art culture through the provision of opportunities for artists to improve themselves through skills acquisition and empowerment. Ekpo (2010) observes that since its inception, the Bruce Onokbrakpeya Foundation has been an enduring player in the visual arts scene in Nigeria. The Foundation, through its Annual Harmattan Workshop, encourages artists to use their creative powers through appropriating any materials and techniques at their disposal to create. Works produced at the end of the workshops are exhibited in different places. For example, it has organized the Amos Tutuola Show, Lagos (2000), participated in the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government Meeting (CHOGM) Exhibition, Abuja (2003), Art and Democracy Exhibition, Asaba (2004) and the Harvest of the Harmattan Retreat Exhibition organized in collaboration with the Pan Africa University, Lagos (2004). In 2012, the Foundation featured the works of 20 artists at the Exhibition Bruce and Harmattan Workshop Experiment at Kajino Station in Dakar, Senegal during the 2012 Biennial Conference.

In 2005, another art group christened *Art Is Everywhere* emerged at the Nigerian art space. The leader of the group is Ayo Adewumi, a lecturer at the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu. Membership of the group is made up of students and staff of different institutions who share their ideology. As the name implies, they believe that art is

found everywhere and the environment has to be properly exploited. The group encourages its members to scavenge the aquatic, creeks, mountains and the streets for materials for art expression. Sowole (2003) in his study of the group, notes that their approach to art creation is at sharp contrast to the regular art studio environment. The author observes that their materials range from the wastes of electronic and electrical materials being assembled into sculptural pieces to the plastic waste combined with other materials into figural renditions. The emphasis of the content of the art of the group is on waste recycling and providing avenues for training young artists and the less privilege on how to make a living from recycling items. Since its inception, the concept has gained much acceptance and is expanding in scope. The group has adopted *A Travelling Workshop Policy* to create public awareness. The workshop has spread to places like Enugu, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Lagos, and Port Harcourt.

Contemporary Nigerian artists who appropriate unconventional materials strive to sensitize the public on the viability of waste and found object as potent creative resources. They also facilitate its practical engagement to budding artists. Artists have continued in the search for the newest material and techniques using any kind of materials, including unconventional media and techniques, to create new aesthetics. Some sections of the public still see the use of unconventional media as a revolt against established standards of art creation (Gushem 2005).

Statement of the Problem

It true that bad economy of a country is one of the factors that affect creativity, but even when the economy is good, some artists enjoy expressing themselves appropriating waste products as their first choice. Today in Nigeria, art produced in unconventional materials largely comes from waste and discarded materials. Works in these materials are subjected to

different interpretation. Odoja, Makinde, Ajiboye and Fajuyibe (2013) have expressed the view that "waste or junks are considered to be useless, discarded materials that are no longer good enough and, therefore, need to be disposed as unwanted." In the society, some people have developed a mind-set that any material found in a location designated as rubbish is concluded to have outlived its usefulness and is, therefore, irrelevant. People with that kind of mind-set see such work as inept and a fraudulent means of art creation. They consider the products as works without any artistic effort, even when elements and principles of design are applied.

Gushem (2005), notes that, the use of waste for art creation (by people who have preconceived thoughts on what art should be), is contradicting and against established standards. Saliu (2005) admits that art products are capable of generating excitement as well as controversy. Vigorous enlightenment embarked upon (by art historians through their write-ups, groups like Bruce Onobrkpeya Foudation (BOF), Nogh-Nogh Art Group, Art is Everywhere Project among others, to draw attention to the potential of waste materials for art expression.

The problem of the study is that there are still arguments for and against works of art created using unconventional materials in Nigeria. The conflicting views for or against art productions in these materials are clamoured by some viewers including some artists. This indeed is a controversy in the creative landscape. The study is therefore set to analyze, using the works of the artists under study, in order to come up with a clear position on the opposing opinions.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to encourage upcoming artists to be open-minded in the use of materials in their creative expression, while the specific objectives are to:

i. examine the backgrounds of the artists being studied;
ii. investigate the motivation for their use of unconventional materials in art creations;
iii. interrogate what informed the artists' courage in art creations with unconventional materials;
iv. find out the relevance of the thematic concerns in their individual compositions;
v. make comparative analysis of the materials the artists individually used; and to
vi. draw conclusion from the findings and suggesting direction of which creation of art work should take as regards to the use of materials.

Research Questions

The study makes use of research questions for the collection of the data. The following questions are formulated to guide the researcher towards the solutions to the problem, as recommended by Leuizinger (1976) and Egonwa (2012).

i. What are the artistic backgrounds of the artists being studied?
ii. What motivated their use of unconventional materials their creations?
iii. What informed the artists' continuous art creations in unconventional materials?
iv. How relevant are the thematic concerns in their individual works?
v. How similar or different are the materials and techniques the artists used?
vi. Which material is most suitable for art expression?

Justification of the Study

One of the challenges of the moment in art creation, is that imported art materials are expensive in the market. Artists who continuously depend on these imported materials are likely to be creatively frustrated and consequently rendered out of practice due to the cost of the importating the materials. The experience of the French Expressionist painter, Jean Dubuffet (1901) is a good example, when he explored and experimented with new and crude materials that were not popular at that time. The works were derided, hated and rejected. He and his colleagues took courage and kept exploring and experimenting. At the end, they came up better and stronger. It therefore, takes the courage of an artist to gather materials from unaccustomed environment and combine them in a new context.

From the experience of Dubuffet (1901) the French Expressionist painter whose works were only later appreciated, Nogh-Nogh brought on those that come in contact with the group as expressed by Kefas (1994), and the success of the *Art is Everywhere* project, expressed by Odoh, George, Odoh, Nneka, Anikpe and Ekeke (2014), show art expression matures with constant explorations and experiments. The copiousness of the unconventional materials creates an opportunity for continuous experiment and exploration. Therefore, artists need to exploit their aesthetic potentials for their art creations. The artists would freely exercise their rights to freedom of expression, and discover new ways of transforming and representing new concepts.

Significance of the Study

The significant of the study is that manipulating waste and found objects (which constitute major materials used by the artists under study) into works of art, shows the innate creative potentials that such materials possess. Unconventional materials exist in diverse forms and

are either man-made or naturally occurring. Generally, waste materials anywhere command global attention as a result of its role in environmental degradation. Growing concerns on climate change have made waste generation and management a topical issue. Perhaps this made Ganiyu (2011) to state that one of the concerns of the environmental scientist is the management of waste products, while another concern is to draw the attention of artists to the realization that every geographical location is rich in the copiousness of materials for artistic expression. Olbrantz (2006) is delighted that artists have explored the use of different industrial wastes in producing art forms that are not only visually appealing, but also environmentally friendly.

In the search for creative fulfillment, artists who have seen the creative potentials of these materials have consistently explored the environment as a useful source of materials for creative concepts. The materials are available and obtained with ease; the cost of production is less; the materials provide new aesthetic windows for visual activities, thereby encouraging entrepreneurship among adherents of the concept. Also, recycling of materials into new contexts is encouraged.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

In the search for self-expression and creative fulfillment, the artists have consistently experimented with wide range of materials as useful sources of ideas and materials. This indeed is a wide subject considering the number of artists practising with different media. Therefore, to carry out a comprehensive study of materials, there is the need to restrict the study to a manageable scope, hence the choice of unconventional materials. The study is further restricted to artists who remain consistent in using the unconventional materials for their expressions. Nine (9) artists trained as painters and now using unconventional materials to express themselves were selected. The study is delimited to their works in

unconventional media that are accessible within Nigeria, most especially those in their studios, homes and galleries.

The selected artists are Ayo Adewunmi, Ayo Aina, Ikechukwu Francis, Jerry Buhari, Mabel Chukwu, Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu Igbo, Nsikak Essien and Sussan Ogenyi Omagu. The reasons for the choice include: (i) constancy in the use of wastes in artistic production (ii) creativity use of waste materials into new and unique context (iii) courage in the continuous use of unconventional materials; and (iv) the fact that works produced addressed socio-political, religious, economic and environmental issues that impact on the lives of Nigerians.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Previous works related to the topic have been reviewed here to establish an appropriate platform for the study. The section relies on information from books, catalogues, reports, newspapers, and the internet, with vital information on the areas which assisted the study. Mittler (1992) observes that when some artists set out to create, they are faced with the challenges of viability in terms of materials and techniques. This perhaps explains why some artists create works with the mind-set to satisfy the desires of their clients. Perhaps some of these attitudes made Jari (1994) to express his concern for the pains artists go through for expressing themselves freely. The author decries a situation whereby a gallery prohibits some works from being shown to the public. The author notes on the contrary that most of the gallery juries were not artists themselves, yet they believe they possess the wherewithal to discern good works, with the yardstick used for such valuation being that of commercial viability. The author sees this as mortgaging the society's artistic future for a few dollars and the fabrication of souvenir artists. He advises that the trend be reversed and attempt to gag the artists be resisted.

Artists over the years have changed tremendously, inventing different media and techniques for their artistic expression. Some of these artists through explorations and experiments have discovered innate creative potentials in media (unconventional materials) than what the public is used to. As a result, unconventional materials have featured prominently in art production by artists who believe in the concept for their art expression. For instance, Reid (1975) states that artists of the Dada Movement formed during the First World War became politically revolutionary, sought to overturn outworn aesthetic standards and create a new

beauty through their exuberant ironic wit, and the use of unconventional materials and techniques for expression. Similarly, Jean Dubuffet and his contemporaries combined all sorts of materials and created distortion of forms in order to find new truths. Dubuffet's initial works were crude, harsh and were derided, hated or ignored, although the antagonism did not discourage him or those who shared his concept.

Cubism, one of the most influential movements of the twentieth century, went through different media and techniques in their art expression. By 1912, analytical Cubism had been carried almost to the point of complete abstraction. The introduction of lettering and imitation of wood graining, together with much greater flatness of the composition, led to the flat planes being replaced by cut-out papers. This gradually led to the introduction of a technique known as *collage*, where pieces of paper could be physically incorporated into the picture to form compositions. Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp are among the outstanding Western artists of the 20th century that created art works using unconventional materials. Pablo Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912) and Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) are good examples, among many works produced, in which unconventional materials were used.

In Africa, Diarra (2017) observes that artists like Kudzani Chiurai from Zimbabwe, Julie Mehretu from Ethiopia, El Anatsui from Ghana, Sokari Douglas Camp from Nigeria, among many other African artists, use mixed media in their art expression. Their art creations are viewed with mixed feelings. Perhaps these types of art expression made Samuel and Barnabas (2006) to note that art, particularly those executed in unconventional materials,are easily misunderstood. Nwafor (2006) states that when he and his colleagues were instructed by their lecturer to "look beyond the ordinary" during their course in three dimensional art, he did not understand it. It was a problem to him when they were directed to scavenge the

refuse dumps in search of junk materials. According to him he went through the initial exercise with less enthusiasm because he was too immature to grasp the idea. Constant experiments with waste materials have since increased his affection for the concept of art creation.

Joshua and Onoja (2015), agree that artists over time have used different media in developing metaphoric concepts in painting. In their study of Alex Nwokolo, Joshua and Onoja (2015), note that Nwokolo transited from the use of one medium to another. They stress that the artist earned respect for his ingenuity and skill in his handling of the media. His works never ceased to intrigue the beholder, offering different interpretations. In a similar development, the authors note that Jerry Buhari is known for his experimental works in various media, and that the artist has shown a high level of proficiency in handling the different media he used in his art expression. Kunde (2011) observes that art created in unconventional materials stirs up controversy among the viewers. The author posits that despite this, art expression in unconventional materials appears to be on the upswing in Nigeria.

Literature on Related Studies

This section reviews literature that particularly focuses on the practices in media and techniques similar to those of the artists whose works are under study. Nigeria Today (2016), states that critics, are always praising works of art for being challenging, disturbing, provocative and so forth. It is noted that most art produced nowadays, exist almost entirely to allow the viewer a window to one world of reality or the other. Modern art is believed to bestow upon artists an infinity of possibilities that were unfathomable during the pre-modern age of art production. Fidelity to nature (Realism or Naturalism) that was once the only viable option for artists in the 19th century Europe has been relegated to the dunghill of

history. This development has allowed the artist break free from conventions. The departure from the mainstream, has given rise to freedom of expression in the art scene. Kunde (2011) however notes that exercising the freedom of expression makes some artists to be as controversial as the arts, they sometimes create. He maintains that art created in unconventional materials often stirs up controversy among viewers.

Olbrantz (2006), in his study of recycle art states that this era of heightened awareness of the environment artists are increasingly turning to junks stores, trash bins, and surplus outlets to satisfy their urge to create while still caring for the planet. The author while reflecting on the tradition of recycling art, states that it dates back to the 19th century when America pioneered the use of recycled items instead of discarding them. The author also notes that the famous artists of the 20th century evolved recycled objects, especially Pablo Picasso, who fashioned a bull head from discarded bicycle bar and seat. Marcel Duchamp, founder of the Dada movement, largely used discarded and found objects in his art expression to react to the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Alexander Calder made whimsical animals from coffee cans, while Joseph Camell created intimate surrealistic tableaux from found objects. In the 1950s, artist Louise Nevelson created sculpture from scraps of wood, while Robert Rauschenberg explored the creative possibilities as an artistic medium. In the 1960s and 1970s, John Chamberlain used auto body parts like squashed fenders, broken doors, twisted bumpers and dented boots to create dynamic and expressionistic works of art. The increase in environmental concern in recent years has gained recycling new credibility. Art in this kind of materials has been organized to demonstrate the creative power of recycled materials and found objects for aesthetics.

Olbrantz (2006) observes that the artists were from a variety of backgrounds. Some are self-taught; others are University-trained in the visual art. Some artists respond to the interesting form, colour, and texture of the found materials, while others found fine symbolic meaning in the cast-off. The author stressed that each of the artist, included in the exhibition expressed fascination for the found materials and the challenges that come from creating new objects from thrash. Each of the artists has a strong belief in the ordinary objects and its ability to be transformed into an extraordinary work of art. Each work in the exhibition makes a unique and eloquent statement on societal issues.

In Nigeria, new approaches by artists—in terms of materials and techniques—are employed to address issues of both national and international magnitudes. For instance, an initiation by the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF), a Non-Governmental Organization, was established in 1989. Its mission is to engender the growth of art and culture through the provision of opportunities for artists to improve themselves through skills acquisition and empowerment. Artists from different areas of specialization in visual arts usually gather for its Annual Harmattan Retreat where participants are open to free art expression. Conventional and unconventional materials are freely used by participants for their art creations with varied themes that cover man's endeavours. The Foundation has, since its inception, taken part in several national and international exhibitions (Oloidi, 2009).

In another development, in 1990, some young artists, including Danjuma Kefas, Babalola Tunde, Ayo Aina, Lasisi Lamidi, among others, sprang up from the Fine Arts Department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Danjuma (2002), one of the leaders of the movement, states that from inception the movement has always had unconventional materials as its main focus. The artists vigorously embarked on creating works of art with discarded materials found in the campus. These materials were reworked upon and they assumed new

context. When exhibition of the works were done, questions were raised by some of the viewers. The artists were worried because of the attitude of some the people towards the works created by them. The artists met regularly at the sculpture garden of the Department to discuss the apparent lack of understanding of their works. However, the peculiar nature of their works also attracted sympathy from other members of the community from other Departments. Most of the people who shared in their ideology subsequently joined them in their regular meetings, seminars, and workshops. It was in one of the meetings that the group adopted the name *Nogh-Nogh Art Group* (Nogh-Nogh is a derivation from the Nupe language, and means "nonsense"). The movement, which is experimental in nature, has membership throughout the country.

As the movement kept growing, other goals such as the creation of foray for discussion, and the propagation of the works of the members, were developed. Members have continued to appropriate unique materials and techniques through constant experiments. The policy of freedom of expression adopted by the movement has not only popularized the movement, but also attracted more members. The artists are always encouraged to use materials and techniques they think can best express their feelings. The group does not seek to influence the adaptation of a particular material or style by its members. Danjuma (1994) expresses satisfaction that their activities have had positive effects on the artistic thinking of people who have come into contact with them.

In 2005, at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, a group of young enthusiastically creative artists led by Ayo Adewunmi came together under the name *Art is Everywhere.* This was in collaboration with Alliance Française, Enugu. Nwafor (2006), notes that their main preoccupation is discovering new ways of reviving, transforming and representing discarded materials in a

new context. Membership of the group includes Ayo Adewunmi (leader of the group), Ayo Aina, lecturers, and students as well as those who share in their ideal. The members are people of like-mind, as shown in their commitment to seminars and workshops. The group has, as one of its objectives, the creation of awareness among artists and the general public of the aesthetic potential of the environment.

The group initiated a mobile workshop policy which has been moving round the country and identifying the local materials within each environment. The materials are innovatively used during the seminars and workshops. Sowole (2012) in his study of the group, states that their mode of approach to art creation, was in sharp contrast to the regular art studio environment. Participants were made to access and explore the waste materials that are peculiar to the environment for their creativity. Some of the commonly found items include; bottle-tops, beads, discarded domestic items, branded polythene wrappers, branded polythene wrappers, melted and grinned plastics among others. Works produced during the workshops are often exhibited at the end of the workshops.

Udobang and Awa (2013) observe that it is difficult for artists and members of the public to reach a point of agreement that a particular media or technique is most suitable for a particular piece of art work. They instead suggest the need to adapt to new situations in order to see new creative possibilities from the eyes of the artists. History has shown art to be dynamic; therefore, society should be willing to see innovation in the work of artists. When studying Nnena Okore's works in unconventional material, the authors observe that her inspiration was derived from mundane materials. These included leaves, sticks, stones, fabric materials, plastic objects, and electric wires, among others. The artist manipulated them together into viable works of art that satisfy her sense of beauty.

In her interview with Udobang and Awa in 2013, the artist confirms that her creativity is driven by the love for the discarded biodegradable materials. Experimenting with the materials led to the discovery of new ways of transforming and representing them to assume new lives. Nnena Okore stresses that her materials and techniques are intended to evoke thoughts on the relativity of the materials and to stimulate interesting conversations about their co-existence in the cultural and natural world. The artist expresses joy that non-commercial galleries that encourage avant-garde artistic exploration have sprung up in impressive number within the Lagos urban landscape, a source of encouragement to the artist who uses waste materials.

In another study on the usage of waste materials for art expression in Nigeria, Odoh et al (2014) agree that art is a continuum made up of a plethora of materials and techniques. Artists who believe in the expressive potentials of the unconventional materials explore the environment as a useful source of materials believed to have potent creative possibilities. Some artists, besides picking found object in the neigbourhood, excavate rubbish heaps for thrashed building materials, disused furniture, useless electronic gadgets, cut-off pieces from tailors and a lot more, which are assembled for the artists' use.

In Nigeria, it is noted that profound exploration and experimentation using unconventional materials is on the increase. These materials vary depending on where the artists reside. As the materials are appropriated, new ideas and compositional techniques keep emerging where profound visual statements bordering on societal issues are made by individual artists. Transforming the waste and found objects into viable works of art, to the artist, is not only fascinating and self-satisfying, but also a reinvention which changes the life histories of the materials used for the composition, which now assume a new aesthetic role.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research design adopted for this study is the qualitative method, which combines both descriptive and historical approaches of investigation. As suggested by Adogbo (2003), this approach involves the description of phenomena within the context of the people's cosmologies. This shows that the approach reports what is seen, heard, observed, and creates powerful feelings or clear images in the mind of the reader. Also, Adetoro (1986), Regans (1988) and Adogbo (2009) observe that the qualitative method is most suitable for showing what exists at the moment. The method involves a systematic, detailed description of phenomena. The investigation is structured to be partly historical, to the extent that the researcher has obtained documented past information by other researchers. It is also reportedly suited for explaining and investigating material cultures such as works of art and their respective characteristics. The study of the paintings of the artists under study are reported and documented along this methodology.

Sources of Data

Two major sources of data were used in this study. These are the primary and the secondary sources. The primary source comprised the artists under study, namely Ayo Adewunmi, Ayo Aina, Ikechukwu Francis, Jerry Buhari, Mabel Chukwu, Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu Igbo, Nsikak Essien, and Sussan Ogenyi Omagu. Each of the artists was visited in their individual studios, where oral interviews were conducted to obtain the needed information. The secondary sources, on the other hand, included information obtained from published books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and the Internet. Facts obtained from these sources

were collated. Egonwa (2012), notes that when data is gathered, they should be analysed and synthesised. In line with this, therefore, the works seen and photographed during the fieldwork were analysed and discussed purposely to achieve the stated objectives of the study. The works of the artists under study are descriptively reported and documented. Each art expression is presented photographically, while information like title of work, name of artist, medium, dimension of work, date of production and location of the work are included as further information on each work.

Population of the Study

The population for this study has already been identified as the modern Nigerian-trained artists, among who nine (9) were selected. Their selection was based on the following; (i) acquisition of formal training in painting in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, but with produced and exhibited works in other areas like installations and sculptures (ii) consistency in practice with unconventional media mostly found within their locations (iii) uniqueness of the materials employed (iv) paintings in unconventional media that impact on the political, socio-cultural, environment, and economic development of the country, and (v) participation in both group and solo exhibitions.

Sampling

For this study, the purposive and judgmental sampling method was used. It involved the selection of the at least one identified artist from each of the six geo-political zones of the country. This also offered a rough idea of the types of unconventional materials mostly used in particular areas. Duniya (2009), Danjuma (2010) and Gushem (2011), among many others, adopted this method and obtained positive results.

Research Instruments

Awotunde (1997) states that research instruments are tools or devices used in measuring, obtaining or recording data. In line with this, the appropriate instruments used to collect data during the fieldwork included questionnaires, interview schedules, observational techniques and historical sources.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is an analytical device or implement which enables ideas to organize within a study. The framework enables the researcher to examine the problem of the study. The theoretical framework for this study is, therefore, anchored on Carl Jung's (1875-1961) theory of "collective unconsciousness", which holds that beneath one's private memories is a storehouse of feelings and symbolic association common to all humans. Stokstad (1995) observes that Jungian theory exhibits spontaneous variables. The author stresses further that artists who interpreted the Jungian theory have been committed to innovation. Pollock (1912-1956), one of American famous painters, was influenced by the Jungian theory. In his art expression, the artist jettisoned the European tradition of aesthetic refinement for cruder and rougher approach in his works, where forms were arrived at unconsciously. Gani Odutokun (1946-1995) developed a concept similar to Jung's theory. Jari (2008), states that Gani believed that some phenomena in life are involved by chance, while others are brought by intention, and that life was about accident and design. The liquidized technique employed by the artist in some of his paintings exhibits the characters of unconscious designs, an element similar to Jungian's theory. Eikenbery (2006), states that innovation in works requires looking for fresh means of expression in varied media and methods. Ragans (1988), having assessed works unconsciously created by artists, agrees that new ideas are seen from works that were never dreamed of by the artists. The author stresses that the work

of art is so powerful that it has special meaning for everyone. Getlein (2002) adds that, the brain responds only to that visual information required to one's needs at one moment.

Proponents of the Jungian theory subscribe to continuous exploration and experimentation. For instance, the founder, International Society for Experimental Artists (Maxine Masterfield) is believed to have created works in line with the Jungian theory. He thinks that the more media, styles and techniques that artists expose themselves to, the more they extend their creativity. A pilot study carried out by this researcher, showed that the artists under study evolved different assorted unconventional materials and techniques in their art creations. The results are the emergence of spontaneous variables displayed at the surface of their individual works.

To evaluate works executed with unconventional materials, as those carried out by the artists under study, depended on the analysis of the potential of each variable that made up each composition. This is in line with the suggestion of Stokstad (1995), Adetoro (1997) and Adogbo (2003).

Design Model

The module suitable for this topic is *eclectic* theoretical work of Henry Drewal as contained in Egonwa (2012). The theory advocates multi-dimensional approaches. For instance, the descriptive approach describes the subject and content of the work, the comparative approach examines the similarities and dissimilarities in materials, methods, techniques and styles of the works of the individual artists. Stokstad (1995), states that, art history embraces many different approaches to visual culture. In his contribution, Ragans (1988) believes that, the module helps in answering the following questions; what is seen? how are the works organized? what is happening? what is the artist trying to say? and what does the

researcher think of the work? The author believes that, answers given to the questions, lead to an effective evaluation of the works. The module enables close examination of the media, compositions, colours, methods, and intentions of the artists. n view of this, the eclectic approach encourages effective documentation which is applied to this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The researcher undertook field work during which oral interviews were conducted. During field work, eight of the nine artists granted the researcher interviews, while one cited general insecurity in the country at that time for the reason for not granting the interview. The artist, however, sent her inputs to the researcher through e-mail, and the inputs were used for the study.

Table 1: Interview Schedule

S/N	Artist	Date and Town of interview	Remarks
	Sussan Ogenyi Omagu	12/5/2013 – Bauchi	Interview granted
	Ayo Ayina	17/6/2013 – Kaduna	Interview granted
	Ayo Adewumi	08/7/2013 – Enugu	Interview granted
	Nsikak Essien	09/7/2013 – Lagos	Interview granted
	Nkechi Awosu Igbo	10/7/2013 – Lagos	Interview granted
	Mabel Chukwu	08/2/2014 – Abuja	Interview granted
	Ike Francis	20/3/2014 – Port-Harcourt	Interview granted
	Jerry Buhari	04/6/2015 – Zaria	Interview granted
	Ndidi Dike	Lagos	Interview not granted, but provided some secondary materials to the researcher for the purpose of this research

Discussion on the Selected Artists and their Works

Freegood (1974) maintains that if the proper study of mankind is man, then the proper study of an art is the artist. In the light of this, the artists under study come from three art schools, namely Ahmadu Bello university (ABU), Zaria; University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka; and Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu. The artists were exposed to clearly-defined educational frameworks. The process was geared towards stimulating the creativity of the individuals, where they had opportunities at different times to express themselves. The artists, and their works, which form the body of the study, are discussed thus;

Ayo Adewunmi (b.1965)

Ayo Adewunmi was born in Ode-Ere, in Kogi State. The artist's creative ability started manifesting when he was only a little child. This was first noticed and encouraged by his father who was a photographer, and who also became his first mentor. After his primary and secondary education, he went to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts (B. A.) in Industrial Design (Graphics Design) in 1991. Since graduation, the artist has been a lecturer at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. He proceeded to University of Nigeria, Nsukka for his Master's in Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree. Ayo's early paintings manifested graphical characters while using conventional materials for his expression. As the artist was increasingly becoming dissatisfied with his art expressions, he went on an extensive experiment. This led him to the discovery of new materials and techniques that ranged from pouring of liquid paints on picture surfaces to completely abstract renditions. Ayo Adewunmi's thirst for visual satisfaction, led him into exploring and experimenting with elements found in his immediate environment for solution. Objects from unrelated backgrounds were assembled and manipulated into the

status of sculptures and architectural structures. Sometimes his compositions are regenerated with paint, thereby giving raise to other images not necessarily planned for. The artist's compositions often offer new innovation to the viewer.

Like other experimental artists, Adewunmi believes art can be created with anything. Currently, his works in unconventional materials are appropriated to focus on thematic concerns which impact on interpreting various national issues such as the socio-economic, political, and religious lives of the people. The courage in identifying and using materials and techniques of paintings employed by the artist has attracted both positive and negative comments from the public. Adewunmi's desire is to create works that appeal to him before it does to any other person. He is, therefore, passionate in his appeal that other artists discover the aesthetic potential of the environment. Hence, he encourages his students and others to exploit their surroundings for inspiration.

Sowole (2013) describes Ayo as the initiator of *Art Is Everywhere*, which appeared on the Nigerian art scene in 2005 in collaboration with Alliance Francaise. However, Ayo was further inspired by a craft village in Burkina Faso during a workshop. On returning to Nigeria, and equipped with acquired experience, he and other artists of like minds set up *Art is Everywhere* mobile workshop. Nwafor (2006) notes that the workshop seeks to address Nigeria's "dirt syndrome" through thought-provoking concepts. It also serves as a platform for sensitizing the public to the fact that beauty and wealth come out of junks found in their neighbourhoods. The workshop also provides a forum to revamp and re-engineer discarded materials into objects of value, among some of the benefits derivable from patronizing the environment. The workshop is organised from one location to the other around the country. Ayo Adewumi and his colleagues use the platform to practically demonstrate the creative possibilities of the unconventional materials.

In his creative navigation, Adewunmi is determined to circumvent all forms of limitations either of time or resources to translate his idea to reality. He is always confident of what he can do as an artist whose heart is full of messages. In the process, the artist has created some works that are noted for their expressionistic naturalisms, with themes reflecting the belief he professes. The artist has always been quick to point out that somebody has paid the prize for his life and that it is incumbent on him to touch the lives of others. Ayo thinks that it is fulfilling to live an exemplary life. In a unique style, the artist depicted a composition that shows selflessness and the need for one person to go through pain for the common good of others. This is demonstrated in his work titled "Carry Your Cross Daily" (Plate I).



Plate I:
Carry Your Cross Daily
Daily; Ayo Adewunmi: Mesh, Wood, Local paint on Canvas;
128x91.5cm; 2011. Artist's collection; Catalogue

The composition (Plate I above) is made of a combination of materials such as mesh, fine saw-dust mixed with paint in varied shades to depict a picture in blended strokes. The figure, captured in realism, is superimposed on the picture plane, blocking the viewers' chance of experiencing a full landscape in the dark. The almost photographical details of the style of rendition confirm the artist's graphic training background in Zaria. The artist places the figure in an almost awkward position, with the entire weight shifted to the left hand corner of the canvas. The figure presumably Christ, is rendered with the head slightly bent to the left shoulder as the figure, seems to gaze at the dark atmosphere which he faces. Christ was perhaps considering the time left before His historic crucifixion that would remove the darkness brought by sin. The cross, clearly depicted, shows the two hands swung from behind to grasp the cross with some sense of confidence and courage, despite the pain. This action seems to help in maintaining a little balance as the figure appears to stagger under the weight of the cross. The single-figure composition walks away from the viewer slightly different from the Mannerists, who popularized emotionally inclined compositions often with overcrowded figures facing the viewer. The emotionally soaked composition seems to dramatically compel the viewer to be part of the pain that Christ experienced years back.

Today, the crazy pursuit of material gains seems to have beclouded people's religious obligation to one another. The work seems to suggest that what Christ did years back is still surrounded with wickedness, hate, and evil witnessed daily in people's endeavours. The principle of self-sacrifice requires commitment motivated by sincere love, just as the Lord loves humanity. If the citizens of a country will imbibe the culture of self-sacrifice, the better it will be for the coming generation, which the artist laments is increasingly becoming less enterprising and disillusioned.

Adewunmi's naturalistic approach to art creations seems to have gradually given way for what seems to be a more radical experimental approach of pouring liquidized paint on the surfaces of his canvas—a style of painting whose result often emerges by chance, developed by Jung's theory of collective consciousness. The style seems to be popularized in this part of the world by Gani Odutokun. An example is seen in the work titled "Child Trafficking" (Plate II).



Plate II

Child Trafficking; Ado Adewumi
Dry Colour flake Paint, enamel, and Recyclable object.
Measurement not given. Year of production not stated. Catalogue 2008.

The painting (Plate II above) is composed of dried colour flakes, enamel, and other recyclable objects. This is a total departure from the realism work in Figure I above. The different shades of the paint in their liquid stages are poured on the already prepared surface. The free flow of paint with some degree of control has led to the accidental emergence of forms. Other forms of different qualities perhaps, aided with brush or painting knife, further make the surface busy. The thread-like strings of colours seem to cobweb the different forms into a united composition. At the center of the picture plane, a monstrous-looking

creature in silhouette seems to suddenly emerge at the center of the composition. The seemingly violent emergence of the creature, causes confusion as other images appear scampered for safety.

The seemingly aggressive work appears to be a revelation of the stage of mind of the artist, and how he thinks child trafficking have negatively impacted on the society. Child trafficking is a monster, and requires the cooperation of all Nigerians to identify the perpetrators. Like Ebola, the citizens should be vigilant and watchful to track down the culprits.

Ayo Adewunmi's art creations are often inspired by the events which determine the materials, styles, and the methods to be employed. This makes his technique quite eclectic as he oscillates between realism, semi-abstract, complete abstract and sometimes installation works that break the boundary between painting, sculptural and architectural works. In his experimental tendency and desire to break new grounds, Adewunmi has discarded the façade of human visual appearances. He sometimes interrogates the visual world of psychic experience in his effort to find the world of reality. He has created works in his attempt to resolve subconscious reality, similar to the style employed by the Surrealists, where exploiting the inner world associated with dream becomes possible. He thinks the reality of life is when people co-exist in peace despite their obvious differences. Hence forms from different pictorial backgrounds were organized and grouped in different scenes to come up with a single composition to achieve the desired tranquility. This is demonstrated in his work titled "Overshadow" (Plate III).



Plate III:

Overshadow, Ayo Adewunmi,
Mixed Media, 40x50cm, 2010. The artist's catalogue.

The work (Plate III above) appears in form of a bird and depicted in mixed media, reflecting scenes of different unrelated activities. The domineering bird suspends its seemingly heavy body in the air, using its two powerful wings as if flying to safety with all its content. The work, rendered in predominately uli style of linearity and colour application, is placed in a profile position. Adewunmi appears to exploit subtle distortions of perspective to give the feeling of ease to his composition. The background of the work, painted in warm colour, appears to suggest sunset. On the contrary, the dotted rectangular shapes display brilliant colours suggestive of midday. The images viewed from the screen-like rectangular windows appear to be unaware of the flight of the big bird. They seem relaxed and show no concern that they constitute part of the elements that occupy the same picture plane. The work seems to offer an allegory of a society in which, despite its obvious socio-political and economic differences, the patriots keep showing concern. The artist agrees that Nigeria is a land of diversity and is blessed with natural and human resources. While efforts are being made by

others to harness the God-given resources for the common good of all citizens, the laudable effort is being sabotaged by unpatriotic citizens.

The current art style of Ayo Adewunmi appears to temporarily bid goodbye to his easel, canvas, and brush style, which seems to give him much satisfaction. His full attention has turned to the philosophy of the *Art is Everywhere* concept, a project which he and his colleagues advocate. The artist admitted that his creativity is further driven by his love for discarded materials which when put together without sketching produces beautiful, though unplanned end results. He reiterated that the materials have fastened his process of discovering unique styles of art expression. This is an innovation which the Federal Government of Nigeria wishes would happen in other sectors of the economy. In order to achieve this, some categories of imported items had had to be banned.

Adewunmi and other experimental artists have developed an unparalleled passion for expression with the materials picked from the environment. Their manipulation of these elements has led to different innovative dimensions being witnessed. Sometimes, numerous processes were adapted that led to deconstruct and reconstruct the works into fascinating outcome. An example of such creative adventure, is expressed in his ability to identify the materials, concept, and styles as seen in the installation work titled “Precious” (Plate IV).



Plate IV
Precious, Ayo Adewunmi, Palm flower,
Sponge Fibre, Plaster of
Paris calabash and metal, 2011.
Tthe artist's cataloque.

This is a concept first developed by artists of the Modern Art Movement led by Marcel Duchamp, where they mostly use fragments of manufactured metallic objects for expressions. For example, Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* and Picasso's *Bull Head* were the creative ingenuities of the art masters of old. Ayo Adewunmi seems to employ a similar concept, but adopting entirely different creative form and materials. The concept was boosted and profoundly influenced by the artist's visit to Burkina Faso for a workshop, and by his experimental effort (Nwafor, 2006). His intense exploitation of the immediate bush resulted into the gathering of palm flower, sponge fiber, dried calabash fruit and metal. The assemblages of the uncommon materials from different backgrounds are skillfully brought together into a radical relationship. The composition appears not only as an exercise of utter freedom of expression, but seems to have also played a clever trick by the effective

combination of the unrelated objects modified to create a startling scene. Here, objects ordinarily good for agricultural compost are used to make a statement.

Economically, the composition does not only focus on creative handling of waste materials, but subtly advocates the exploration of the environment, the exploitation of its aesthetic potential, and the transformation of the products into cash. Adewunmi does not only traverse the bush of his neighbourhoods, but also identifies and gathers industrial wastes and manipulates them into a whole to interrogate the visual world. The materials could be familiar, but the trends employed for executing and presenting the final works, are often unfamiliar. The artist's desire seems to depend on the material's aesthetic potentials and what outcome the composition would bring to bear on the end results. An example is the installation work titled "This House Is Not Fallen" (Plate V), and composed in assorted colourful empty can materials after the content has been consumed.



Plate V
This House Is Not Fallen: Ayo Adewunmi:
Empty Cans, 2009. Source, Retrieved on the 15/5/2014.

Often, the attitude towards these types of containers after the content has been consumed is to either squeeze or fling them away into the dust-bin or into the bush. The artist, on the

contrary, does not see the empty cans as ordinary industrial wastes, but as an astonishing aesthetic potential ready to be reorganized. The graceful and elegant flow movements of the different designs on each can, were rearranged by employing simple mathematical calculation and arrangement to depict a seemingly three dimensional architectural design in space. The satirical work exhibits an incredible detail and intricate structure, lavished with different flowing designs as it seems to take on a life of its own. The approach seems to demonstrate how courageous the artist is in handling such materials to gain balance.

Some public commentators have at different platforms described the country as a mere geographical expression. The work, therefore, seems to be an eloquent and direct reaction to some of these comments, particularly those orchestrated in the Western media that Nigeria will disintegrate in 2015. The artist confirmed that the work seeks to generate conversation geared towards uniting the country. Those behind the negative campaign and their sponsors have been hugely disappointed. It is hoped that those who hate Nigeria's unity as a country will have a rethink and understand that this house is not fallen as suggested by the theme of the work.

Ayo Aina (b.1969)

Ayo Aina was born on the 12th August, 1969 in Kano. He hails from Yagba-West Local Government Area of Kogi State. While at a very young age, Aina's creative ability was influenced by his uncle and like any other child he started drawing on walls of buildings and other suitable surfaces. When he was in primary school, art was a compulsory subject at Manguwan Primary School in Kano. At Soba Government Technical School, he was further exposed to Fine Arts and Technical Drawing. On completing his secondary education, Ayo's desire was to study Architecture, but later he changed his mind and decided to read Fine Arts. He gained admission at the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University,

Zaria, where he specialized in painting. After the mandatory National Youth Service (NYSC), the artist decided to go for his second degree at the same University, in the same Department, in 1995. On completing his studies, he settled down as a full time studio artist.

In his earlier days as a professional painter, Ayo Aina considered the realization of pure sensual beauty through the manipulation of colour as his ultimate goal. He has created works to satisfy the desires of his collectors who patronise him. At a point, he felt the need to go beyond what he was doing. It was the turning point to the artist when he started experimenting as an exercise to his freedom of expression. He deliberately began creating works without specific meaning (abstracts) to him. The new works, he saw as a way of celebrating freedom from years of artistic tutelage and from parental dependence. From then on, Aina kept exploring and experimenting with different techniques using the conventional materials. Duniya (2009), in his review of the artist's work, observes that his major works are categorized into paintings and installations.

The artist admitted that he was enthralled by his experiment, mixing both the conventional and unconventional materials in his expression. At a point, Aina decided to opt out of using sole conventional expressions, where he had great patronage by his clients, to a more radical mode of expression using unconventional materials. He has a sense of fulfillment each time discarded items take new bodily forms through creative works. The artist's attention turned to his immediate neighbourhood where he identified and used materials that are essentially eclectic in nature. Junks, particularly those which he saw as rich menu to satisfy his creative appetite, assumed a commanding position in his expressive journey. Aina periodically uses metaphor, humor and irony to address critical issues like environmental degradation, social, political and economic concerns in his works. Aina sees himself as an artist in a recycling age and with the availability of junks, he thinks he was well armed to vigorously investigate

the visual world. Having reviewed the artist's works, Schneider (2008) describes them as conceptually unique, and that he understands his society and analyses same through his experimental collections. In a similar development, Jari (2008), while analysing the direction of Ayo's art expression, states thus, "Aina's paintings have begun a transformation into painted relief, or relief paintings, perhaps en route to becoming painted sculptures or sculpted paintings." The author contends that over the years, trends in art practice have effectively dissolved boundaries between various genres.

The artist has demonstrated his dexterity as a die-hard environmental and human rights campaigner by creating works in as peculiar styles as he could. This is achieved through his relentless search for new media with which he displays diversity in themes, materials, techniques, styles and content in his art creations for effective communication. Different statements on wide range of issues were made through his works. The artist doesn't appropriate materials that are strange to the public, but visually inject life in discarded materials, normally committed to daily uses. An example of this can be seen in the installation work titled "Global Warming" (Plate VI).



Plate VI
Global Warming, Ayo Aina,
Iron, Mesh, Rod, Paper and Wood, 2005.
Retrieved on the 10/1/2013.

The artist needs not travel far in his imagination to find ideas to drive home his message of what he wants the public to understand. The kitchen, with its warm consuming effect, seems to be most ideal to pass his message. The artist exploited his stylistic diversity and constructed a round stove and an oval shaped object symbolizing the globe loaded with waste papers. Red paint, popular for its strong wave length, appears to be deliberately chosen to paint the stove, perhaps not only to attract the viewer's attention, but also to give the viewer a clue to his intention for the creation of the work. The neutral white hue used in painting the globe is dramatically mounted on the three-legged metal stove, where a realistic cooking atmosphere was created. The process seems to reach its climax when inflammable objects that are dissimilar in size were gathered under the metal stove just ready to be lit. The entire composition appears to be the artist's reaction against the careless handling of the environment. The attendant effect of poor treatment of the environment is not limited to a particular people or region, but the entire world. Perhaps the horrifying natural disasters

being witnessed in recent times, especially the one in Philippine in 2013, is one of the worst among many in human history. The work seems to be a sign of warning and a call for pragmatic steps to arrest the ugly trend.

Aina seems to have eliminated every element associated with works that would sell in elite galleries for the comfort of some few. His passion, instead, appears to be directed at rescuing the nation (Nigeria) from imminent destruction occasioned by persistent corruption in high places. Just when one thinks enough is seen of the materials, methods and styles used by the artist for expression, something even more creative and fascinating comes to the fore. This is exemplified in another installation work titled "National Cake" (PLATE vii).



Plate VII
National Cake, Ayo Aina, Iron, Cake, Plate, 2010. Retrieved on the 10/1/2013.

The viewer is confronted with a composition (Plate VII above) that seems to make the world of art strangely diverse. The composition, viewed from below the eye level, shows what look like iron bars constructed round a plate with a small cube-like cake at the center. Rat-traps, painted in black are strategically placed, probably to secure the cake which seems to

be the center of interest. The unrelated objects used to form the composition, ordinarily appearing to have no bearing with art expression, are dramatically brought into new relationships. The little cake which looks hardly sufficient for an individual's bite is to be shared among a large group of people. This appears impossible, except the miracle of the days of Jesus, where thousands of people were fed from a loaf of bread and two fish reoccurs, the well-protected cake cannot go round.

The composition appears to express the dilemma of an economy in dire need of diversification. Crude oil, whose price has collapsed in the international market, has been the only major source of income. Today, the present administration scampers around to generate revenue elsewhere, while stringent steps are taken to effectively handle and manage the badly battered economy as indicated in the work. This calls to mind the austerity measure of the Babangida regime in 1985, in attempt to better the economy. The centralization of the cake at the center in the composition by the artist appears to speak volumes of the Federal Government's policy, where the much talk about "national cake" is concentrated at the center. Perhaps the seemingly attractive center informs the struggling by the political class to acquire power (means to get wealth), making the process look like a do-or-die affair. Due process is negated as all arsenals at the disposal of the privileged class are deployed to occupy the office where the process of sharing the national cake is taken.

In another development, the seemingly secure environment depicted around the valuable "commodity" by the artist is an allegory of the security outfit set up to deter corruption. It is common knowledge that, the very people at the helm of affairs, appears to have perfected their art of looting so much that, the presence of the security outfit is irrelevant. These elites who loot soon start brandishing their ill-gotten wealth in the full glare of the poverty-ravaged society. The body-language of such political elites appears to give credence to

politics in this part of the world, as business ventures rather than rendering service to humanity as the common best practice world-wide. Transparency at all levels of governance, as the art work appears to advocate should be the watch word of people in places of responsibilities.

Ayo Aina continued to create works that seem to make references to activities of political gladiators in Nigeria. History is replete with patriots who have thrown away selfish aggrandizements for the country to emerge as a socio-political and economic power. Their immediate constituency, therefore, was Nigeria as an entity. The legacy left behind by the heroes past ought to be sustained. Instead, the culture of bitter political wrangling emerged at the national landscape by short-sighted political elements who introduced religiosity and regionalism leading to crack on the political wall of the country. Division and self-centeredness seems to be so deep in the life of the Nigerian politician, to the extent that decency is thrown overboard, till power is acquired, as exemplified in the work entitled "Rat Race" (Plate VIII).



Plate VIII
Rat Race, Ayo Aina, Oil Paint, Slippers and Traps,
120x80 cm, 2006 Photograph by the researcher, 17/6/2013.

The themes of Aina's works appear to determine the appropriateness of the media to be used as well as a guide he wants the viewer's conclusion. Easel, canvas and brushes that appeared to be absent in the previous works seem to stage a comeback. The quality of the canvas is textured with saw-dust, allowing some particles to jot out in low relief with a slice of paint meandering and enhancing the beauty of the natural space. At the top, combinations of cool sweet colours were applied. Six well-constructed black rat-traps were set in a vertical position. Shades of almost raw lemon-yellow colours appear hastily applied at the lower part of the canvas, with a slice of paint and saw-dust visibly adoring the surface. The mounted rat-traps at the top of the canvas perhaps represent anti-graft agencies that check corrupt officials. New bath-room rubber slippers are mounted almost in an upward movement were abundant, creating an impression of a tough race from the bottom to the top.

The politically motivated work appears to be the artist's disgust with the political class. In their desperation, the least of their possessions (the cost) has to be given up to climb up to stardom. Based on the characters of the elements that form the composition, it therefore appears justifiable winning the race bare-feet than to have the slippers as a failure. The political class today can promise anything to the uninformed voter to get his vote, only to turn round to trick him. The artist, in this work, appears to warn against continued impunity resulting in high-level corruption. Perhaps the way out of what is gradually becoming a culture in Nigeria is to have the political will to severely punish the perpetrators of the heinous act irrespective of political affiliation.

Each of Aina's modes of expression appears to be driven by the strangeness of his approach that seems to avoid formalism. Besides political issues, the artist employed another unparalleled stylistic methods in yet another satirical style to address the issue of global warming. This recurring issue of man's negative attitude towards the environment tends to

reveal Aina's deep passion for immediate attitudinal change from the public. The artist's creative powers in diverse style to reach out the public is unwavering as he confirmed that he strongly believes his art creation is part of his duty to reach out to the society and create a positive impact. The artist thinks that global warming portends danger not only to any specific geographical location, but to the whole of mankind, and therefore the need for global approach exists.

Similarly, true to the artist's uncommon stylistic composition, domestic items likely to aggravate and stimulate global warming were identified within the immediate surroundings. This is exemplified in the work titled "The Greenhouse Effect" (Plate IX).



Plate IX
The Greenhouse Effect, Ayo Aina, Water Heaters, Wire Mesh, Jude, Canvas and Oil, 120x80 cm, 2006.
Photograph by the Researcher, 17/6/2013

The choice of materials and the technique employed in the work (Plate IX) above appears to be a total deviation from creating works with alluring surface usually seen in most works. The artist chose not to use stretchers, and applied dull brownish colour at the background

that seems to almost rebuff the eye. Aesthetics seems to be deliberately eliminated in the unique style, instead, strange discarded domestic materials that can hardly be easily associated with art, are appropriated for the finishing of the work. An outline of a house, perhaps in its higher outline of simplification, is depicted at the center of the picture plane. Almost in the same outline, a semi-circular design, also in light-blue colour, is depicted just below the house. Arranged across the semi-circular design below the painted building, are heaters immediately below the dramatically depicted house.

The simplified outline adopted displays a child-like character that provokes questions as to how the individual items relate with each other in the composition. Although the entire work seems to be crude and unattractive, there appears to be much deeper message than its mere appearance. Perhaps the intention of the artist was not to leave any of his viewers uninformed. Perhaps considering the seriousness of the message, the use of actual heating elements considered hazardous, to the human race were used. The work appears to be a warning against promoting activities that are unfriendly to the environment.

Ayo Aina continued to oscillate between painting and sculpture in what seems to look like ground-breaking, and closing the gap between the two disciplines of painting and sculpture. In his approach that fundamentally favours constant aesthetic and structural change (due to their ephemeral nature and materiality) the idea is generated around man and his activities. The artist saw his inventions as inspired by his love and commitment to the manipulation of used-up materials and discovering new ways of transforming and representing them in new context. The example of this is seen in his installation work titled “Child Trafficking” (Plate X).



Plate X
Child Trafficking, Ayo Aina, Cloth, racks,
Toys, pegs and wheel 2008.
Retrieved on on the15/6/ 2013.

The work is the assemblage of dummies of different sizes mounted haphazardly on a wheeled baby drier. Clothes of varied sizes, colours and designs are arranged and held to firm position using pegs. While the faces are effectively hidden, concentration appears to be focused on the lower limbs. Perhaps, this is to conceal the true identity of these children on the unholy transit from the unsuspected public. The lower limbs are left to dangle almost helplessly, as they seem to be ready to be driven off to an unknown and unfamiliar destination. The bare-feet shown in the work appears to reveal the haste in which the victims are forcefully packed together. The artist situated the work in a manner to show the bigger ones at the edges of the satirical vehicle with their hands clutching firmly at the edges in a gesture of silence. The posture employed seems to heighten the sense of danger the children have entered into. Beckoning hand at the far right seems to make no impact, as there was no volunteer to rescue the situation. Therefore, the gory deed appears to have been done.

This calls to mind the sad episode of 14th April 2014 where about 200 secondary school girls were fetched from their hostel, leaving the parents in anguish. Men and women are into this heinous business where some of the victims are taken outside the shores of Nigeria. A close analysis also seems to expose the social status of the parents of these children as coming from low economic backgrounds. Evaluating the composition from first sight, the viewers may be prompted to conclude the composition as a normal way of exposing items to be dried. On the contrary, the issue of child trafficking, which is becoming endemic in the country seems to be the focus of the artist. The malady appears to be another face of slave trade abolished in Britain, immediately after the Slave Trade Act of 1807 and the emancipation Proclamation in United State of America (USA) of 1864.

Children of the poor in society of different ages are most vulnerable to this inhumane treatment. Since they are needy, all sort tactics are applied to entice them to follow even strangers. As the case in Plate II above, the work is meant to educate the public against evil in child trafficking and the need to join force together, to vigorously fight the menace.

Ikechukwu Francis Okoronkwo (b.1970)

Ikechukwu Francis Okoronkwo was born on the 27th 1970, in Lagos. After his primary and secondary schools, he went to the University of Port Harcourt and graduated in 1995 as a sculptor. He went for his Master of Fine Arts degree, where he specialized in painting from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 2001. He is currently a painting and mixed media lecturer at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Port Harcourt. He has participated in many group and several solo exhibitions. He belongs to several professional organizations.

Ikechukwu Francis thinks that his training at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka is crucial to his development as an artist, not only for the professional training he received in school, but also for the specific style the University advocates for its students. The style known as *"Natural Synthesis*" a philosophy and style espoused by Uche Okeke when he was made the Head of Department of Fine and Applied Arts in the early 1970s. Students and teachers were encouraged to employ the approach in their expression. Emphasis was laid on distinctive style of art that made reference to classical *uli* and *nsibidi* markings as well as other aspects of pre-colonial Nigerian arts. Given Francis' background in both painting and sculpture, he tried to build relationship by working in synergy with the two areas as a mixed media artist. In his desire to acquire as much experience as he could, he became close to one of his lecturers (El Anatsui) who mentored and strongly influenced by his elaborate works in discarded materials. The lecturer encouraged his students to use materials found in their everyday environment, generally known as *Sankofa* which, literally means, 'go back and pick' (Ottenberg in Staurt, 2014). The artist acknowledged the influence of El Anatsui on his works.

Although, his first paintings displayed evidence of the synergy between painting and sculpture, Ekechukwu derived much satisfaction in experimenting with found objects in line with the principle of *sankafo*. He explored and experimented with every item that appealed to him. His attention was focused on discarded electrical products which littered the environment. To have these items in his custody, the artist behaved the insane by his frequent picking and scavenging heaps of rubbish. He felt the concept of *sankafo was* more than just going back and picking up, but to him, it had an active component of reclamation which is necessary for rebuilding a fractured society.

Ekechukwu Francis is of the view that art moves forward only through exploring new subjects. Perhaps that informed his consistency in manipulating found objects such as circuit boards, transistors, and wire, to create forms that make reference to urban grid in reaction to treatment of the developing nations. Reference is particularly made of African nations which grapple with rebuilding their societies back out of the fragmented scraps left after colonization, yet they are being frustrated in different fronts. The artist appears to use this concept to broaden its application to address other issues of concern.

His works, engendered by the Internet, made him one of the curious and experimental artists using discarded electronics in Nigeria. He confirms this when he states thus:

> *I stroll the street of Nigeria scrounging, scavenging, digging, picking or collecting used and refused items from site of their last abode. Circuit Boards, Compact Disks. Plate, Diskettes, Empty Cans, Old Newspaper/Magazine prints, Ropes, Fabrics, Condensers, Wood stumps, copper wires... journey their way from these dumps to my studio where they play in concert with factory.*

Ekechuku derived sufficient satisfaction in the world of art whose ideation is generated from the architectonics' designs on radio and computer circuit boards. He found the circuitry content ready images to be reverberated into a new context to communicate. The compositions were used as metaphors of cities, and their activities in the contextual global village. He has transited from one creative stage to the other which necessitated his works to be in series. Francis used unique themes and stylistic approaches to address issues of socio-political, economic, educational, and environmental concerns.

Admittedly, the circuitry style of expression was Francis' favourable mode of expression. He intermitted the phrased of his ideas using different mixtures of materials with paint taking the commanding lead. Canvas and panels were suitable surfaces for the expression. To those who are acquainted with Francis' current styles of expression, give him no

opportunity to be counted among artists whose works are faithful to realism. The physical strength applied in handling sculptural works, seem to be dramatically transferred to his painting works. The example of this is shown in the work titled "Unveiling 2"(Plate XI).



Plate XI
Unveiling 2, Ikechukwu Francis, Mixed media,
76,m x68cm, 2008. Exhibition Catalogue, 2010.

A seemingly down-cast female figure in veil is superimposed on the picture plane. The elegant and gorgeously dressed lady seems to be still and lost in deep thought. The head is depicted slightly tilted to one direction, her eyes taken away from the viewer and her lips firmly tied, portray her as not being pleased. Besides, her eyes are made to look down at nothing in particular while, her right hand crosses over to her shoulder exposing a portion of her necklace, appears to further show that she is not conscious of the happening. The choice of colour application shows wild and aggressive attack of the canvas to the point that, each stroke in impasto technique stand, as a composition of its own. There appears to be deliberate fusion of the elements at the background, leaving no single space for the viewer to isolate the subject-matter from other forms. The picture plane is further broken into numerous geometrical shapes with varied colour intensity.

The law of perspective was seen in the application of textural strokes as the unplanned forms recede to the background. The patches of paint left almost carelessly on the surface of the canvas, tend to make the surface of the canvas alluringly busy. The unique colour application evokes a highly textural collage-like surface with an unending rhythmic colour celebration. This is contrary to the posture of a lady who displays not only an appalling personality, but a nervously unfriendly posture and a lady who appears uninterested, in the presence of the viewers. In African context, unveiling as the theme suggests, is closely associated with merriment. The viewers, who appear to be part of the composition, seem disappointed due to the unimpressive gesture and mood of the celebrant. The work, perhaps demonstrates the artist's subtle protest against the horrifying act by some societies of conscripting under-age girls into marriage against their consent.

Moved by the availability of discarded electronic parts scattered all over the places, Francis seems to exploit the opportunity to carry his styles of art creation to the next level. The works created, were not to function as they were before, but to present a new context entirely. An example of this is the work titled "8 Faces and a Village Square" (Plate XII).



Plate XII
8 faces and A Village Square, Ike Francis,
Mixed Media, 2003.Retrieved on 20/52013

A typical African philosophy of representing human figure with the head unduly exaggerated is displayed in this composition. Iron sheet and different electronic materials were welded on a flat surface to form the images. The human figures in portraits forms, depicted with elongated necks who seems, almost struggling to contain their extraordinarily, large heads. The portraits are arranged horizontally, perhaps to cover the working space. Heavy paint, almost in an impasto technique, was applied, perhaps to further embellish the images, but without much detail. The faces in their poorly defined stages were placed stirring at the observer. The contour lines that define each personality appear to be extended to define other images, at the backgrounds of the canvas. Evidence of *uli* idiom, developed as a style, by the artist, is applied almost arbitrarily on any available space. This style seems to further trigger off, other endless shapes at the surface.

The work seems to portray village elders, in their different stages of apprehensions. Modern culture imported by colonists, appears to have overtaken everything they owned. This seems to be expressed, by the disjointed lines used by the artist to give character to the representational and non-representational forms. The style is further replicated in the colour application as well. The composition seems to be symbolical of a society whose history and value have been interrupted, where individualistic style of life appeared to have taken over. The young seemed to have lost touch with their roots particularly those in cities. The attempt of patches of harmonious colours, dropped here and there, by the artist, was perhaps to overcome the gap created by modernism.

Ekechukwu's dexterity is displayed in his ability to use similar materials to create unique works with different messages. The artist at different occasions complained of the rate at which sub-standard goods were exported to the developing countries. These items were shipped to such countries as a way of disposing off their hazardous wastes. They know these

items are potential health and ecological problems. Perhaps the international politics behind some of these policies are to keep the developing countries perpetually undeveloped, and also to serve as their ready-made markets.

Creativity continued to be inspired and dominated by the reality inherent in Francis' environment. The aesthetic potential of the environment may remind mere history to the young generation, as long as no serious attempt is made, to deliberately go back to the root. Again, since the past appears to be forever lost, the struggling today by third world nations is to understand the new technology. They are equally aware that the secret of the technology and the politics behind it can hardly be exposed to them perhaps for fear of losing their markets. Francis sees the products brought into the country, as remainder of the lost rich history of the people. The discarded objects reclaimed, were intricately composed as metaphors of cities to address a number of issues affecting the lives of the general public. An example of this, is shown in the work titled "e-Cities and Garbage" (Plate XIII).



Plate XIII
E- City and Garbage, Ike Francis, circuit Board,
Transistors, Cans and paint:
60x60x3cm: 2004:
The Artist's Catalogue, Retrieved on 20/9/2013.

The artist appeared to dialogue with the materials from their various abodes to first ascertain their aesthetic compatibility before they were composed. The rectangular shaped working space placed horizontally, was divided into three grid-like lattice outlays with almost equal space in between them. At the far left hand corner of the working space, are round discarded tins in their different sizes and degrees of damages, arranged vertically, portraying what looks like industrial site. At the centre and extreme right are several circuitry boards with their contents haphazardly displayed, reflecting what appears to look like a residential area. Colours in varied shades are applied on the entire surface in a manner that other forms seem to appear involuntarily. The composition seems to present an illusion of landscape of a sub-urban city viewed aerially.

The seemingly poor town planning with its lopsided architectural designs appear to depict typical Nigerian cities closely located near industrial areas. The work shows no sufficient space between the industry and the residential areas regardless of the health hazard involved. The continually poor arrangements appear to have their roots from our colonial masters who directly set up such industries or provide the technical experts. The often over-crowded residential buildings complemented by heaps of the industrials wastes as high as the building structures themselves, further compound the health of the people. What seems to be the over-riding concern is the profit the owners would maximize from their investments at the expense of the people's welfare.

The composition is deliberately arranged to give the impression of a jumble situation, to express his displeasure of poor orientation left by the colonial masters. Perhaps the underdevelopment being witnessed in some of these counties is informed by the poor foundation laid.

Ekechukwu's materials and technique of art creation assume complex dimensions. He put together unrelated materials of almost three-dimensional forms, from different sources to new relationships. Colours are applied to areas to snowball into the other with ease. Despite the materials used, the results the works often exhibited, is that of strong painterly characteristics. This thrusts the artist forward as imbued with the desire to manifest the visions of the old and the new to communicate (A Natural Synthesis advocated by his Alma-Mata in interrogating the visual world). This must have informed the artist's confidence and consistence in the principle of e-wastes art expressions. Here, series of compositions are joined in grid-like approach to make a statement. An example of this is seen in his work titled "Emergent Nitizens" (Plate XIV).



Plate XIV
Emergent Nitizens, Ike Francis, Mixed Media, 60x60cm, 2007, Photograph by the researcher, 20/12/2014.

The close-disciplinary approach is vigorously pursued through several different circuit boards placed alongside pictographic markings. Each image neatly arranged, possesses unmatched quality, probably designed to allude to societal diversity. Every compositional unit is heavily painted, making it difficult to establish the identity and the electrical and other components brought together to form the composition. Analysing the entire

composition, the images are interlaced, displaying naturalistic and non-naturalistic forms. The colour scheme used, beseems a common denominator, binding the proportion of the different images into one whole. The quality appearance of the major characters in the work reflects the artist's capability of creating new relationship from unrelated items to communicate and impact positively to his viewers.

Ekechukwu's allegorical presentation of the plight of the developing countries is the composition the artist makes with used-up or sub-standard electronic goods. The artist appears, unrepentantly consistent in inventing new concepts to his works to press home his desire. In pursuance of this, much more unrelated materials in almost riotous manner are gathered with little regard for orderliness, to create the composition. The mingling of forms became more spontaneous and colours, in different shades and textures are applied haphazardly, at any available space. The perceived structures are done without resort to space and streets. The nature of the materials used, necessitated viewing the work from an aerial point view. There is a strong indication that forms are reduced to a mere simple shape.

Series of depths are created by the application of strong colours, which tends to emphasize complex design of other shapes unexpected. This appear to makes reference to Jung's principle of collective unconsciousness. Unlike the aggressive approach in colour application the artist is known for. This is clearly exemplified in his work titled "… and Our Cities Stretch to the Moon" (Plate XV).



Plate XV*:*
...and Our City Stretch to the Moon, Ike Francis,
Mixed Media/Installation, 60x60x9cm, 2007. 2010.
Retrieved from the artist's web-site on 20/9/2014.

The work (Plate XV) above portrays a shift in orientation, technique and style rendered by the assembly of predominantly strings of the electronic materials. The composition, viewed from below the eye level, portrays obvious disorderliness. Balance appears to be half-achieved in the delicate alternating lay-out of predominantly circular, square and rectangular shapes provided by the structures of the city. The aerial focus only allows for the over-view of the size of the city, the aesthetic inherent in the plan and styles of constructions remain hidden.

Therefore, one is left to draw conclusion about what one can make of the structural characteristics of the work. Poor planning appears to rob the city of its beauty. Besides building structures that look to choked-up the available space, heaps of waste appeared to further block spaces. Free flows of streets that often complement the excellence of a city are absent. The work rather exhibits rude obstructions of the streets with abundant recklessness.

The consequence of this cannot be imagined. Perhaps the recent floods ravaging everywhere would have been less severe, if the culture of impunity rooted in the society was addressed. Ikechukwu Francis thinks the work is not just a mere expression of the urban cities in space, but a mutually dependant relationship between people and the environment.

Jerry Buhari (b.1959)

Jerry Buhari was born on the 11th July 1959 at Akwanya, Kachia Local Government Area of Kaduna State. After his primary school in Birnin Gwari and Zonkwa in 1972, he proceeded to Government College Kaduna where his career as an artist was decided. In 1977, he was admitted at the famous Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where he specialized in painting. He teaches painting and drawing in his Alma-Mata, and has taken part in many groups and solo exhibitions both nationally and internationally. He is a member of several professional bodies.

Jerry Buhari confirmed that his childhood days were influenced by his two brothers as he watched them draw on the sand and papers. At that level, they were his role model. His creative ability was further developed and moved to the next level when he schooled at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Today, the artist displays versatility and competence in his transmutation from the known to the unknown. He is one of the national and international art scholars of repute in Nigeria. His works change profoundly, animated with wit. His curiosity in creativity is best revealed in the series of his paintings appropriated to address day-to-day occurrences. Babalola (2004), having assessed his inventive imagination, describes Buhari as '*an Apostle'* of Art who has imbibed the spirit of experimentation from his mentor, Gani Odutokun. On the other hand, the artist considers his painting as inspired by his search for meaning in life and therefore, employs varied materials and techniques to

achieve this purpose. The forms and themes employed by the artist focus mostly on socio-political, religious, communal and environmental matters.

The artist doesn't see himself as an accident, but as an individual assigned by the Almighty to perform a specific function within the timeframe and to be accountable. He is among artists who are visually, responsive to the general mood of the society. The artist wields an uncommon sense of communal responsibility beyond his personal aggrandizement. This is perhaps, largely connected with his upbringing where, besides enjoying the companionship of his elderly brothers, communal effort was highly encouraged. The comfort of the natural environment and its (streams and hills) serenity, were to play a major role in his fight to preserve its purity. The artist appears to use his unique painting creative power to advocate and promote cohesiveness. Buhari's unquenchable curiosity appears to be best revealed in his works created in series, making him an all-round artist. He has extensively experimented with different media including materials found in his environment which other artists, seem not to have given much thought to. The artist admitted he located and identified their aesthetic potentials before the eventual usage. An example of this is seen in the work titled "Hanging water" (Plate XVI) below.

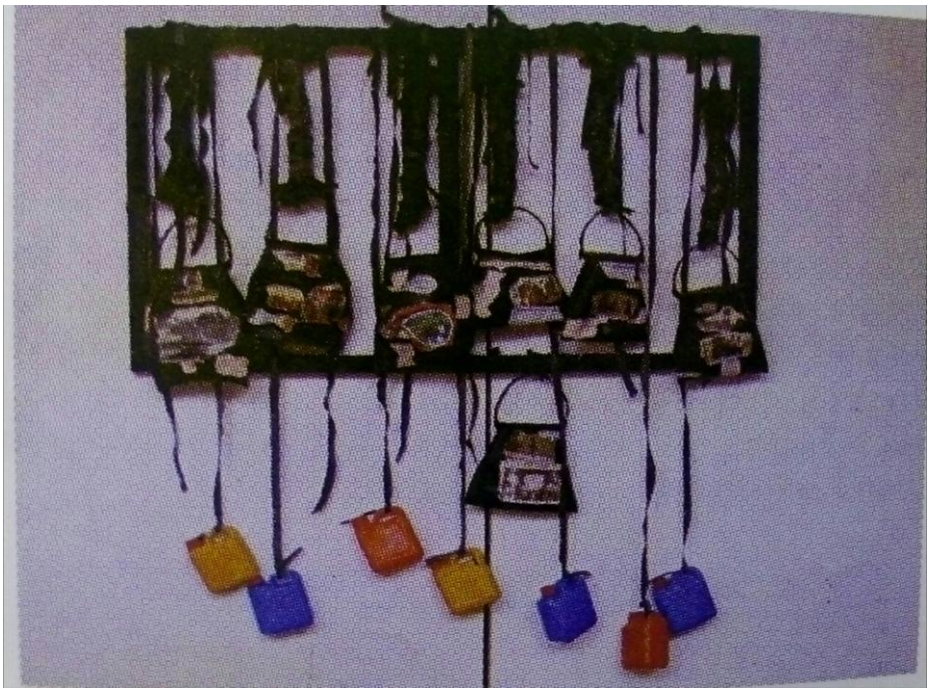


Plate XVI
Hanging water, Jerry Buhari;
Wasted rubber, old newspapers, miniature; 156x206cm; 2006
.Retrieved from the artist's website on 12/2/2015.

The work is a product of assemblage of discarded rubber materials. The scrap materials are recycled into containers. The containers of varied sizes, like those used for drawing water from wells, are produced out of the large sheet of rubber. While some of the containers are painted, some have newspapers, mounted on them. The old newspapers are those that carried articles on water that were cut and paste on the water buckets. Each of the water drawers has robes tied to their handles, and arranged at different levels as the containers hand on a rectangular frame, at the backgrounds. The unleveled manner which characterized the arrangement of the containers and the twisted robes, hanged on the handle of each water drawer, creates an impression of struggling to perhaps get little out of the available murky water. The artist deliberately decided to hide the hands behind the struggle. Many places in Nigeria hardly assess good drinking water. In villages, and sub-urban areas, the available water in ponds and rivers, are competed upon with domestic animals.

Jerry Buhari has used creative dexterity in diverse way to advocate for social justice to the down-trodden in the society. The artist decries situation where politics is played with essential things of life, like water. He notes that the work seeks to explore and critique the politics of water supply in contract awards and the way selected access is given to population based on myriad of ethno, social factors. The pasted newspapers on the containers enhance the narrative of the subject. The work seems to give less emphasis to attractiveness in preference for art as idea in this composition.

The simplicity, with which Buhari approached art creation, shows his expertise in breaking new ground not only in term of materials, but the technique of arrangement of the containers. The technique used appears to cultivate the spirit of unity among people who are passing through the same painful experience.

The eclecticism exhibited by Jerry Buhari's works, appears endless, in term of media and styles which are heterogeneous. He develops new sets of concepts that discourse public issues concerning their collective wellbeing. The artist appears to follow the line of Kenneth Martin's works which was concerned essentially with space that gave structure by lines and facets. In his conceptual navigation, Buhari sees aesthetic possibilities in almost everything. Although he has created works that carry his viewers along with him, he does not allow them dictate the direction of his art creations. Like the Abstract Expressionists who sometimes sought to move away from art creations they were used to, Buhari assembled different unrelated elements and used varied styles for his art creations. In this work (Plate XVII), the artist took leave of the canvas and brushes, and executed works appropriated with mundane materials. Like the Dada artists, Buhari was increasingly becoming radical in approach when he moved round to pick and assembled the chosen items. Even when such materials make no reference to natural world, the compositions still satisfy the nuances of

proportional balance, a style only achievable by an artist endowed with the mastery of proportional analysis. The work was exhibited in form of installation which he thinks can best address the issue of the moment. This is exemplified in the work titled "Power Chair" (Plate XVII).



Plate XVII
Power Chair, Jerry Buhari, Chair, frames, pieces of cloth and paint,
Chair, 86cmcmx46cmx45cm, Yellow Frame
23cmx23cm, Brown Frame
25cmx23cm: 2007-2008
Retrieved from the artist's web-site on 20/1/2014.

The viewer is confronted with a work composed of different items closely associated with industry. Two rectangular dominated stretches-looking constructions painted in deep blue and raw primary yellow colours, were consciously mounted on a vertically constructed chair. Portion of the chair, painted in yellow ochre which was also made to stain the deep blue cushion cloth used to cover a portion of the chair, is further embellished at the back with deep red ribbon. The artist adjusted the designs so carefully that no single portion of the work is more important than any other part. It is not clear why the work painted in yellow colour was conspicuously placed at the center of the chair. A close look at the

composition, reveals that rectangular blocks are arranged in asymmetrically order, perhaps to achieve harmony. A much closer analysis of the work further shows that striking balance is achieved. The work offers a new vocabulary among his art creations reviewed, in its portrayal of the world of mathematics and mechanism, a subtle advocacy of a synergy between art and technology is seemed suggested.

The artist, through the theme, laid emphasis on the power chair without the accompanying human figure, seems to portray the manipulative nature of the political gladiators and other power seekers. This implies that, if the power chair is not occupied by them, it should be occupied by their stooges, because of the attendant advantage attached to it. An African political leader would do everything possible to perpetuate himself in power against the wish of his people, as the work appears to suggest.

Buhari's increasing new visual vocabulary continued to bring into sharp focus, new concepts that, kept highlighting the diversity of his materials and styles. The degree of inventiveness in term of materials and styles kept increasing in his works. The works were best on the artist's implicit idea of not imitating nature, but an impressive organization of unrelated materials from unrelated abodes in his compositions. Buhari's choice of materials and style, sometimes invoke strange and fearful moments in their subjects and content as seen in his painting entitled "Decay and Regeneration" (Plate XVIII).



Plate XVIII
Decay and Regeneration, Jerry Buhari,
Mixed Media, 23x23x15 cm, 2007.
Down load from the artist's web site on 20/3/2014.

This is probably, one of the ways, the artist considered to bring his work in line with what he considers best to address the issue of the moment. Like other experimental artists, piece of wood jagged and shaped by termites, is regenerated with paint. The form is further superimposed with layers of textured surface with different tube covers juxtaposed at available space. Other parts of the wood, is left unpainted creating more variety on the quality appearance of the work. Mounted on another table, the composition is slightly raised at the far right hand corner exposing the uneven surface, exhibiting the irregular feature, and a humorous complex map of Nigeria, placed in a tilted position. One may appreciate the work in several areas thus; an opportunity for the rejected to relive life in a new context needs to develop and sustain maintenance culture, and to check the fast eroding topography of the land.

The artist laments that, Nigeria is a shadow of its self, due to the advance of desert in the north and the lack of political will to control its menace. He lamented the once

agriculturally-rich middle-belt region, that today lies eroded, and the unabated deforestation of the south seems to have been left empty and naked. All these combined, seems to make the desire of the government to diversify the economy rather than continuous relaying on oil, in jeopardy. The work appears to be a call on the government at all levels to be proactive in addressing the issues of the environment.

One of the unique trademarks of Jerry Buhari in art creation is to compose works whose meanings require deep contemplation, otherwise, the message, is lost. The artist admits that, he creates his works and carries his viewers along. Sometimes, he dwelled on works and themes that have global implication though, the selection and composition are with the local materials. He also sometimes, exhibits an uncommon doggedness in putting together materials which appear to redefine art anew. The fame of the artist's work is not only on the upswing, its aesthetic horizons is expanding due to the new discoveries.

Buhari used his constant touch with the global current affairs, to inform his creative focus and strength. An example of this is shown in his work titled "Man on Earth and Glittering Chains, Charms and Mystery a Foyager" (Plate XIX).



Plate XIX
Man on Earth and Glittering Chains, Charms and Mystery a Foyager, Jerry Buhari, Paint and pieces of wood/Installation, 2002.
Retrieved from the Artist's web-site on 20/5/2013.

This is certainly, another constructivist style witnessed in Plate XVII above, but in different technique. Iron of varied sizes and chains are welded together in a circular formation, while the chains are welded at the left and right sides of a round object. The round object, representing the globe, was hanged just above the eyes-level with the chains appear dangles by the sides. A heap of what looks like a depleted map of the globe, painted in black colour, is seen scattered in different directions, at the bottom of the globe. The horrifying sight of the composition is aided by a sun-set painting at the background which evokes a hazy atmosphere. Perhaps, the chains that hold the globe together had to be forced by much stronger power to give way, as the dangle chains, hangs loosely, just above the heap of the debris as if beckoning for help.

The work that evokes emotion, appears to be the expression of the artist's bitterness and deep concern over what he believed to be a culture of unfriendliness conduct towards the environment. He was quoted to have stated that, much of the earth's natural structure is about to varnish forever. It should be remembered that Buhari experienced serene and pure environment in his childhood days, unlike the current horrifying global disasters being experienced. Perhaps, this necessitates the employment of startling imageries in composing the work to provoke immediate action globally.

Assorted threads from different sources, as well as cut-off pieces of fabric materials from tailors, formed part of the materials the artist found suitable to be exploited in investigating the visual world. Each of Jerry Buhari's composition presents newer way of looking at the visual world. The flexible materials (threads and pieces of cloths) used for the expression, portrays a radical departure from the use of stiff and hard discarded materials that the artist is known for. This demonstrates his level of creative independency in expressing his personal feeling. When Buhari was asked why he oscillates from one materials and style to

the other? He retorted that as he passes by, he dialogues with the material first before picking them for any creative possibility. This implies that the materials used, must have proven their unique expressive potentials. It appears the artist is more fascinated when each of his art creation continues to assume more complex nature. The example of this is portrayed in his work titled "National Issues" Plate XX



Figure XX
National Issues, Jerry Buhari,
Acrylic on canvas with braided scarp fabric,
230x102cm, 2008-2009, Exhibition Catalogue

The artist appears to have gone through the pains where he employed entwining or weaving method or both to imbue the work (Plate XX) with different patterns of coloration. This, indeed, is a revelation of the artist's versatility in areas of the visual arts. The work is stretched from left to right hand side of the working space, exposing its intricate decoration at rhythmical intervals. The threads, in their decorated colours of dominant red, green, blue and white, are laid vertically and unevenly trimmed. Immediately, on the floor under the work which appears hanged, is the replication of the work, but lying in a heap as if violently torn.

From a close observation of the rectangular work in camouflage displays on bluish background, it is apparent that Buhari appeared to emphasize the dexterity and the aesthetic aspect of the work. Its purpose, it is not very clear therefore, when guided by the theme of the work, conclusion can be drawn. The work is characterized by myriads of very tiny smaller threads of different colours woven into a highly decorated rectangular-shaped. The work seems to present an eloquent allegory of a country made up of people from different backgrounds that live side by side together. The threads that link the main work and the part almost cut off appear, to reflect challenges, which are opportunity for development once they are understood. Nigeria needs to be pro-active; perhaps, the current resources channeled towards restoring peace to the north eastern part of the country, would have been channeled towards other areas of development.

Mabel Onyekachi Chukwu (b.1975)

Mabel was born on the 12th of October 1975 at Ehirne Mbino, in Imo state. While still very young, her love to recreate things by gathering together objects of uncommon backgrounds just to appreciate their beauty had started. Between 1980 and 1986, when she had completed her primary school at Bende, her idea about art was being defined. Between 1987 and 1992, she had completed her secondary education at Girls Secondary School Owerri, where art was taught as one of the subjects she offered. In 1993, she was admitted to study Art at the popular University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where she specialized in painting, and had a sense of accomplishment. She belongs to many professional organizations. The artist has taken part in groups and solo exhibitions.

Mabel currently teaches painting and drawing at Federal College Education (FCE), Zuba, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Her art creation has grown over the years due to vigorous explorations and experiments in different media. The artist has sufficiently exploited the

meandering lines of *uli* idiom of the Nsukka Art School at the beginning of her professional practice. In her bid to uniquely and freely create her own style of art, Mabel felt that gathering information was as important as sketching carried out in a live situation, whether it is a landscape or working from still life. To collate appropriate information, she pulled together various elements with which to put together the compositions. As the artist stepped up her experimentation, new materials, styles, and techniques were discovered. Art was far much more than she initially thought. The artist experiences a sense of satisfaction, each time she executes her works using combinations of media. Popular among some of her favourable materials and styles include synthetic sheets, paint, egg-yolk among others, where she takes them to liquidized level and allows them to freely flow to create accidental effects. The outcomes of such works are essentially non-representational. Reviewing Mabel's works, Filani (2012), notes that, the artist has always been poetic in her creative transmutation of simple materials into complex framework for creative exploration. She uses her visual eclectic drive, to advocate the course of the womanhood, whom she describes as marginalized in this era of democracy. She therefore, considers as parlous, the state of the womanhood within the ambiance of men dominated society.

The artist used her creative power, to interrogate the visual world raising fundamental issues on the current gender imbalance. Her art expression has explored areas of paradox in femininity such as the pains and gains of marriage, sex, childbirth and motherhood, among many. Ironically, one would have expected Mabel's images to be dominated by females and their expressive mood and gestures, but the artist opted for non-representational images. The themes of the works guide the viewer in enjoying the works. Some of the works that express her concern include "A Loud Laughter" (2001), "It is a Crime" (2000), Always on Her Mind" (2003) " Continuity" (2002), " Bad but Good Portrait" (2011)," Painful Flow" (2011), and "Strength" (2010).

Mabel's fascination with various sides of nature, informs her attention on landscapes and their attendant aesthetic potentials. Like the paintings of Madonna executed in series against the landscape by Raphael, she thinks the beauty of the landscape is never complete without the artistry of the female body. Perhaps to re-echo this, Mabel conceived the idea in complete unique materials and style when the landscape was captured to emphasize the beauty of the home. This seemed to be achieved when the artist brought her resourcefulness to the fore. An example of this is the work titled "Continuity" (Plate XXI).



Plate XXI

Continuity: Mabel Chukwu,
Treated Guinea Corn and oil paint: 19x34 cm, 2002.
Exhibition Catalogue.

In the work above, the artist appeared to maximize the exploration of her immediate environment where grains of guinea-corn display their different nuances of browns, white and black. Adhesive was used to hold the grains together to build up the forms in various

geometric shapes that characterize the entire work. True resemblance of nature, was avoided as much as possible, and the woman captured in elongated style, is superimposed on the picture plane. An almost perfect circular mask-like shape was used to represent the head. While the eyes are left at suggestive level, the nose is accentuated to over shadow the mouth. Combination of black and white colours, were used to define the exaggerated dangling ear-ring, while the elongated neck, pronounced by heavy dark tune colours, rests gracefully above the shoulders of the well-dressed woman. The two hands drop reluctantly, besides her bulged stomach as she squats behind a big round container defined with concentric lines. With the materials, the artist captures the essence of a typical elegant African woman. Mixture of brown colour and the grains are used to create depth at the background with little attention given to the clarity of the forms.

The pyramidal-shaped composition that depicts a middle-aged lady, in well decorated attire and containers, conveys the woman as milk-maid. She appears to shrewdly fix her entire attention on the on looker, in expectation. Besides, the seemingly protruded stomach is indicative of pregnancy which does not deter her normal activities. Mabel was able to exploit the sinuous characters inherent in the materials with propriety of difficulty to capture the essence of the African woman in her natural beauty. The gorgeously dressed elegant lady seems to show the artist's way of not only projecting beauty, but humble disposition. Again, the kneeling position and the confident posture, seems to reveal her sincere intention in matters that enhance peace and mutual understanding. This attitude, which used to be popular among African women, is today fast disappearing. The artist thinks that, the present generation of male folks has interpreted this valuable aspect of African culture as weakness on the part of the woman.

Perhaps in search of what she thought was a greater means of expression to effectively communicate, Mabel entered another phase that seemed more stylistically complex in her art permutation. Unlike her work in Plate XXI, the artist boldly devised liquidized style in mixed media for her art expression, whose outcome was essentially unpredictable, a concept that reflects Jung's theory, where emphasis was on spontaneity. The artist took temporary leave of the easel to adopt a method that allowed for free movement of the liquidized paint. Art expression became largely non-representational, a realm of expression she deliberately made no reference to the appearance of the visible or natural world. Satisfaction was derived from the elements such as forms, colours and lines which formed the content of the compositions. Mabel is committed to the exploration of lyrical potentiality of brilliant colours and lines to highlight the plight of the woman. An example of the work that demonstrates the woman's natural weakness easily taken advantage of, is the work titled "Fake Love" (Plate XXII).

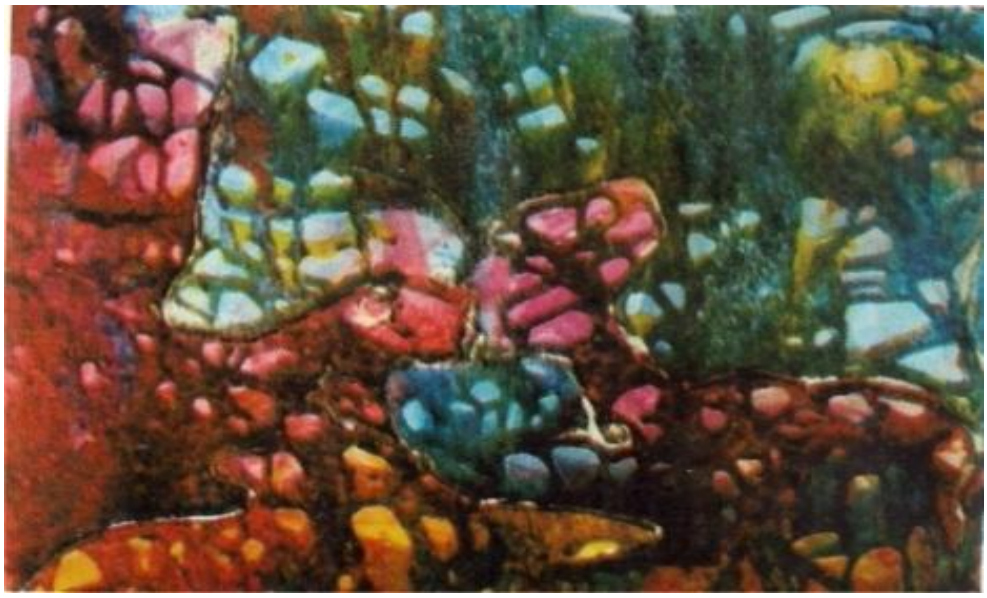


Plate XXII
Fake Love, Mabel Chukwu, Acrylic and Egg on Paper,
48x65cm, 2010. Photograph by the researcher, 8/2/2014.

The content of the mixture of paint in the composition above, appears poured on the surface with minimum control. The two different colours were made to gracefully flow with much control, from two opposite directions, to synthesize at the meeting point. As the application in orange-red and bluish-green settled, it is apparent, the artist broke the picture plane with the tip of the brush to give the surface the effect of dashes and numerous dots stand on their own. While the broken parts of the egg-shells struggle to register their presence in the midst of the acrylic dominated surface, shreds from the mixture, seem to abort the effort. The numerous shapeless forms of different sizes that characterize the surface of the work, an impression of a heap of stones is created. The brushwork shifts from warm to cool hue in almost equal strength. Again, a close study of the work reveals that the artist exercised her deep knowledge of colour mixing resulting into virtual rainbow of colours displayed in the composition. The unique approach seems not to leave the viewer in doubt, as it creates constant invitation to enjoy its alluring surface. The effect of this technique is to such a point that, it appears to supersede works with specific subjects in them. A diagonal analysis of the work in their liquid stage indicates that, the two opposite colours demonstrate complete reluctance to fuse together. The undulating shape marks clear boundary in between the two, as the brush marks shift from the warm to the cool in almost equal strength. It is unclear, whether the artist intended to bring to light the sharp division between the two lovers, and perhaps expressed the insincerity some people exhibit in love. The artist believes that, the emotional impact of such attitude is obviously immeasurable. She admitted that the woman is often the worst victims of the cheat-merchants, who adopts angelic posture as they roam about pretending to be looking for lovers.

Mabel appears to have good reason for oscillation between representational and non-representational expression. She created dialogue between the two, where the surface displays what looks like wet-in-wet with visible brush strokes. Stiff lines are made to run vertically and across the work. Mable has a way of bringing her viewer into her compositions by making them part of the works mentally. Colours are laid in a way that one appears to entirely overwhelm the intensity of the other; the idea of this is highlighted in the work titled "Timeless" (Plate XXIII).



Plate XXIII

Timeless, Mabel Chukwu, Calk, Pastel,
Gold and oil paint on canvas,
35x6ocm, 2011, photograph by the researcher, 8/2/2014.

The work is executed in chalk pastel, copper and coated with wire strings mixed up. Layers of paint in different colours ranging from warm to cool are applied to cover the surface of the rectangular working space. Subtle light is introduced, beginning at the extreme left and terminates almost at the middle of the canvas where deep shaded blue ends haven started

from the right hand corner of the canvas. The surface of the work manifests overlaid layers, depicted horizontally with varied tonal scale, while vertical broken lines are laid perhaps to further embellish the surface. In contrast with her work in Plate XXII, colours were made to blend physically on selected parts of the surface, until the required balance was achieved. Some other parts of the work, rare quality surface was created by intersecting strokes of colours. The style evokes intense interest because of the unplanned colours and other forms that emerged.

Mabel appears to deliberately depict a dangled big wrist-watch almost at the center of the composition to overlaps part of the forms in the work. The satirical wrist-watch, with an unclear human face at the center (presumably) a woman, depicted in a perfect circle, stand in isolation. Close study of the work, indicates that the tonal treatment of light, through medium values to dark from the top to the bottom, maintains constancy. Again, the glowing light from the middle left hand corner of the canvas and dark blue hue at the right, do not affect the watch, despite the patch of blue, just below the handle of the watch. The face of the wrist-watch indicates the face of a woman in place of numbers. Mabel does not seem to only paint to advocate the indispensability of the woman, but provides a sensuous aesthetic avenue to protest the woman's relegation to the background. The work and the chosen theme appears to portray the woman as not limited by the tides of a patriarchal environment, but like any other human being, contribute to the development of the country in any capacity. Perhaps because of advocacy like this, that the governments at all levels are recognizing the roles played by women.

Mable still maintained her chancy technique of liquidation; yet, each creation exhibits something quite different from the other. Here, more styles of rendition appear to be added

slightly different from her previous styles as seen in her work titled “Painful Flow” (Plate XXIV).



Plate XXIV
Painful Flow, Mabel Chukwu, crylic and egg on pape, 48x65cm, 2011. Photograph by the researcher,2/8/2014.

The content of the mixture appears emptied on the working surface, and allowed to freely flow without control. This technique is done in layers with the purely dark content, poured first. The mixture of orange, blue and the egg-shell were emptied, leaving behind visible effect of opaque particles, in their numerousness. The numerous but not dense dots, allow the underlying colour to be seen through. The opaque particles take different shapes, inspired by the intense force with which the mixture was poured and allowed to move. The accidental surface treatment, allowed the orange colour to smoothly flow at the extreme left and right hand corners of the canvas. At the center of the canvas however, there is massive concentration of the mixture of orange, blue and the egg-shells. The diverse elements are allowed to flow at the middle of the canvas and create vertical ridges-like forms.

The treatment of the surface, particularly towards the bottom of the composition, was perhaps intended to evoke an intense attraction of the viewer through the intricate display of highly textural tones and hues that stand in bulbs. Mabel in this painting demonstrates her deep knowledge of symmetrical balance by maintaining the effective distribution of the liquidized elements that constitute the composition. The work appears to be an allegorical expression of the violence and pains the womanhood periodically encounters. The artist agrees that, the technique appropriated, is her way of interpreting the experience of the women. Mabel thinks that the woman needs understanding.

Mabel Chukwu doesn't only use her art creation as a weapon to challenge a societal system, structured to favour the men folks, but sensitizes the woman of her inevitable stake. Women are cautioned to avoid self-pity or allow male chauvinism or domestic challenges, make them fizzle out. As a mother, everyone passes through a woman, making her position unparalleled as shown in her work titled "Strength" (Fig. XXV).

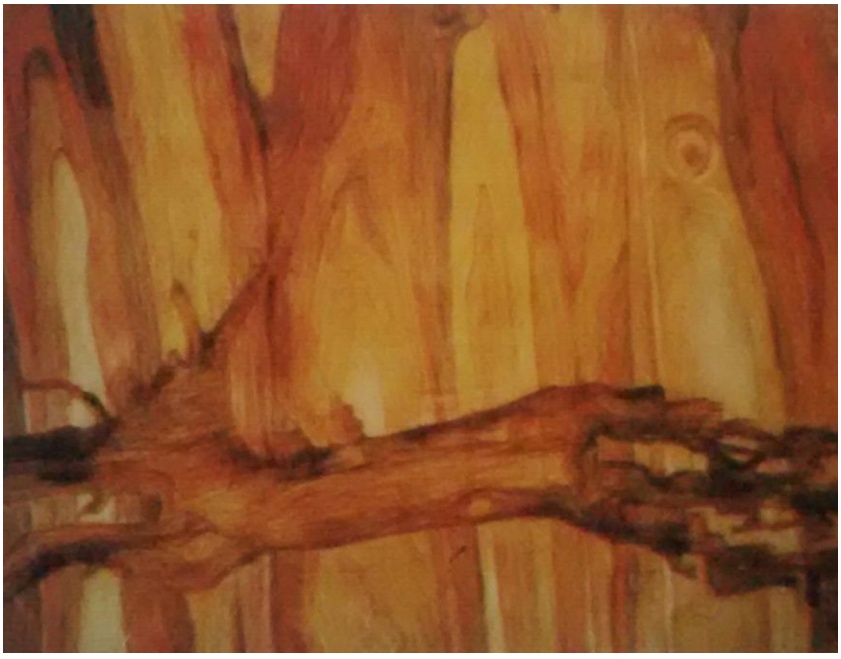


Fig. XXV
Strength, Mabel Chukwu, Chalk pastel and Plywood, 90cmx120cm, 2010. Exhibition Catalogue, 2010.

The work reveals Mabel's adventurous navigation to create works in as unique materials as she possibly can. In her experiment, she immediately exploited her environment for inspiration. Wide rectangular plywood, enriched by its natural shades of brown design, is laid horizontally as the background. Another wood of similar colour with broad irregular base, is placed in a vertical position at the extreme left hand corner of the background. An appraisal of the three-dimensional work, there appears what looks like the features of a woman, further aided by the marking with pastel chalk. In a twisted and almost an akimbo standing position, the female-looking figure spreads wide her disproportional arms as if in action.

Towards the waist, there is a subtle widening that gives erotic shape, to the protruding buttock, while what appears as a cover to her is the shadow cast from bumps, developed at the waist. The pastel chalk was also used at the background to pronounce the natural designs and features which enhance the composition. The seemingly sensuous surface exhibited by the composition, is another side of the woman as projected, by the artist. The strength of the woman is fully exercised, when she swims against the tide of gender exclusiveness, and passes through the wreckages of wickedness, to rescue her children in term of disasters. The artist agrees that, the woman is a symbol of immeasurable strength.

Ndidi Dike (b.1960)

Ndidi Dike was born in1960. After her primary and secondary education, she was admitted to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University Nigeria, Nsukka. She graduated as painter in 1984 with a Bachelor degree in Fine Art. She is a full time studio artist, and has held several exhibitions both solo and groups within and outside the country. She is a member of many professional bodies. Ndidi Dike, who has attained certain proficiency and fame, started as a painter before entering her new found land of sculpture where she

synthesizes painting and sculpture. The artist is considered to be one of the largely resilient of the many female artists who once practised and exhibited, but seems to have disappeared from the art's landscape. She has exhibited rare courage, and developed a career out of her professional training. Ndidi is among some of the few women who have broken what many see as chauvinistic attitude of men in respect to the profession. To come this far, the artist might have endured pains, discomfort, and hardship without complaints from her family.

Taking a cursory look at contemporary artists in Nigeria, Ononeme (2004) describes Ndidi Dike as one of the prominent contemporary female artists today in Nigeria, who has not only captured the imaginations of Nigerians, but also the international community. The author stresses further that, Dike always displays competence in her creativity. The artist has travelled far and wide and acquired experiences. Perhaps Dike's skill is attributed to the inspiration she received from symbols and motifs of Igbo Society (Uli), Yoruba, Ibibio, and the painting techniques of Australian Aboriginal Community as well as her creative ingenuity. Perhaps her cross cultural experience she acquired, helps her create works that break down the wall of cultural barriers.

The artist is easily versatile and experimental, using varied media in different styles and techniques. She largely uses cloths, leather, coloured beads, straws, wood among many, to make unique innovative creations. Irrespective of the materials, styles applied, Dike's works always display painting and sculptural characters. Often, materials found in the environment less considered for any aesthetic value, are regenerated with brilliant colours with which exquisite works are produced. An example is seen in the work titled "Lagos" (Plate XXVI).



Plate XXVI
Lagos, Acrylic, Glue Cane on Wood, Ndidi Dike, 91x122cm, 2009.
Retrieved from the artist's web-site on 11/10/2014.

Dike exhibits courage and dexterity in bringing together the uncommon materials that look like straw for her expression. She appears to spend a great deal of time preparing each of the pieces. From all indications, sketch was first made, and painting of the background was followed. The treated cane were cut almost of the same high, and painted in shades of red, yellow, and white. Adhesive was then used to carefully build up the image. The pieces are arranged according to their colour wave lengths hence, dark red colour is arranged close to the middle of the working space, and shades of yellow and white colours are arranged in an orderly manner towards the extreme top of the picture plane. At the bottom left, light brown colour is applied, which at the middle right, light blue is applied which brings out the image much clearer. A highly textural surface with an undulated shape of what looks like a crocodile, perfectly depicted in a horizontal position, was portrayed.

Analysing the work against the contrasting background, the crocodile-like looking creature appears, to stretch itself as if struggling to swallow another creature. Ironically, that is the artist's map of Lagos situated beside the Atlantic Ocean. Perhaps the artist's effort to find a more visual equivalent to the map than the abstract lines often used to come out with the contour lines to define maps. The composition seems to convey a pictorial coloration as a

metaphor for the roles that Lagos plays in the socio-economic life of the country. The brilliancy of the mosaic-looking work in its splendidly rich and vibrant colour, projects itself not only to a tangible level of adoration, but exhibits a sumptuous decorative detail. It's finishing glows with subtle tones of predominantly warm colours, probably, as a complement to the city being a center of excellence.

Lagos, the former capital city of Nigeria, means different things to different people, and as a center of excellence, it is large enough to accommodate all kinds of activities. To the artist therefore, probably, the visual eulogy accorded the city, does not amount to any political sycophancy. Like Florence was to the Italian artists, so is Lagos to Nigerian artists. Large concentrations of artists who settle in the city have actualized their dreams where works that range from sumptuous softness to aggressive stylistic rendition were at different times displayed. Didi who seems to have experienced a robust cosmopolitan popularity of the city with its attendant love for distinctive art styles, conceived a unique artistic way of portraying the document of governance.

The viewer is taken down memory lane by the satirical depiction of the document that accorded the city's former status as the strong sit of power. The politically motivated work presents the first constitution, used during the colonial era and which is much more relevant than it was before. The approach in its subtle simplicity is probably, to sensitize the public of its importance in this political dispensation, given the fact that many are ignorant of its function. This is demonstrated in the work titled "Constitution" (Plate XXVII).



Plate XXVII
The Constitution, Ndidi Dike, Fabric, glue, needle and thread, 243.84x121.92cm; 2011.Retrieved from the artist's website on 11/10/2014.

The artist skillfully handled this with utmost assertiveness. Collage work, as art style introduced in the early 20th century, has since assumed a complex nature. The style employed by Ndidi Dike appears to be her way of expression, quite apart from what was commonly seen. Several techniques were seemed applied, for instance, the fabric material appears starched to achieve its stiffness as displayed. A combination of stitching and suture were intricately made to run horizontally, across the fabric material which seems to hold the draperies stand in firm position. Shadow cast from the folds although overlapped, further make the work interestingly busy. The work appears to remain the viewer of scroll, an ancient way of keeping written record. The dull gray colour with patch of yellow colour that looks like stain at the middle seems to suggest how long the document has been.

Assessing the work much closer, the numerous intricate folds were made to run vertically in a manner that they become kinetic. The viewer is therefore made to face a sumptuous and highly decorated artistic expression of a constitution in its strangeness, which Lagos had long been its custody. Didi Dike's work in fabric materials appears to be on the increase,

providing a new way of appreciating beauty in each art creation. It is apparent; the fabric experiment has assumed a much more dynamic detail in her continued search for style that is uniquely hers, as exemplified in her work titled "Entropy of a State" Plate XXVIII.



Plate XXVIII
Entropy of State,Ndidi Dike,
Acrylic, Net, Nails, Wooden Rings on Wood,
243.84x121.92cm,2010,
Retrieved on the on the 10th October 2014.

The work above, appears to be an improvement of Plate XXII in which combinations of different techniques such as suture, stitching, folding and gumming were used. In Dike's inventiveness, the artist is opened to vast range of limitless possibilities of image-making. The surface of the panel was enriched with the fabric materials of different textural qualities. The artist's sculptural interest was revealed by her almost physical three-dimensional paint impression. The surface is segmented in a diagonal ordering, perhaps in accordance to the textural properties of the fabric materials. Each segment was captured in low and high reliefs. Varied tunes of contrasting colours of different intensities are clearly displayed. The flexibility which the forms offer, enables the artist to delineate the many subtle variations of light and shade interplayed on the space provided.

The striking part of the composition is the balance relationship established between the forms and the colours in pre-dominantly yellow and green. Although the seemingly wild brush application of colours arranged in discordant relationship, there is an achievement of optical colour balance and exciting effect. Again, the near rhythmic arrangement of what look like story buildings in colour of strong wave length, produced compelling vibrating vitality. Besides, the slash of paint left behind by the juxtaposition of the brush strokes in different tones, appears to portray a crowd of people moving around an over-crowded, not well defined buildings. A situation that seems to suggest city life where people from different backgrounds mill about together as the theme appears to suggest. Despite the people's differences, they need each other to be able to grow as a nation.

In another work, Didi Dike appeared committed to innovation inspired, by intense experiment, imploring peculiar materials, styles and technique. In the work (Plate XXIX), there is a sudden and radical shift from robust paint application in Plate XXVIII to carefully constructed geometric shapes of different shapes. The artist maintained her style of art creations where she seems to keep the motive of her work from been clearly seen, leaving the meaning opened to the interpretation of the viewer. The focus of her experimental tendency was centered on maneuvering uncommon materials to achieve balance of forms and colours, as exemplified in the composition titled "Permeations" (Plate XXIX).



Plate XXIX
Permeations, Ndiki Dike, Acrylic, Metal, Mesh, springs, Polyurethane paint tubes, Stencil and wood, 243.8x121.94 cm, 2011.

Retrieved from the artist's web-site on 11/10/2014.

The composition is lavishly enriched with dissimilar shapes and varied textural treatment of the surface. The use of other materials like mesh, spring, and metal among many other materials, was perhaps to enhance the quality of the background, while the over-riding interest of the artist, was probably the expressive potential of harmonious colours. Each of the forms was treated in uniquely qualitative brush marks, and lines lay horizontally across the canvas. The forms of modified shapes stylistically make no reference to nature, is depicted setting out vibration in a disorderly manner. The surface of the canvas conveys an impression of either beautiful textile design or a charm of architectural plan, punctuated with saturated colours that evoke visual gyration. The clever interplay of the geometrical shape, reminds one of works of the Neo-Conceptualists developed in the mid-1980s, who evolved a working technique that included various configurations of elements to enable them explore different subjects slowly and methodically (Stokstad, 1995).

The eclectic nature of Dike's styles seems to bring to the fore, the depth of her influence by others combined with her personal experience which appears to be integrated into the composition. The designs, although displayed marked individualism, the tranquility of the scene is achieved by the harmonious colours of browns, greys, and light-blues. Didi Dike's concept appears to stimulate the principle of integration, an issue the world and Africa in particular need. The domination of geometric shapes as means of art expression, continued in Ndidi's interrogation of the visual. She appears to be in search of communicating the viewer in a greater simplicity and clarity which seems to necessitate her evolving a new vocabulary. Probably to achieve this, found objects used for the constructivist technique, were gathered beyond Nigerian shore. For instance, door accessories brought from Tiimbuktu of Mali, were effectively combined with sand, coins, cowries, mirror, truncheons, and padlock were used. In addition, tiny decorative incisions in variations were perhaps made to complement the others. This appears to reveal the extent to which Didi had gone to gather the materials with which she could best express herself. Like a French artist, Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1964) who went through similar innovative stylistic experience, the avant-garde saw this as the future of art.

The difference however, was the materials, motifs and style used in the execution. The arrangement of the three equally high forms, show how much careful attention the artist placed in putting the works to form one composition. Besides, balance and proportion of the forms within the rectangular working space, is achieved as seen in her work titled "Waka-Into-Bondage- the taste of 3/4 Mile" Plate XXX.



Fig. XXX
Waka- Into-Bondage the Taste of ¾ Mile, Ndidi Dike,
Door accessories from Timbuktu,
Door nails, from Mali, Badagry sand, Coin,
Cowries, Mirror, Truncheois,
PadlockVaried dimension,Measurement not given,
2008. Exhibition Catalogue 2010 .

The seemingly revolutionary work (Plate XXX) brings to the fore, Dike's wealth of experience with other cultures beyond Nigeria. The three shapes that form the composition are characteristically similar. Their main features are the rectangular postures and intricate decorations through various grooving technique made on each of them. Each also displays what look like screen windows that assume the shapes of Lorries which evoke slow motion. The detail arrangement seems to be analogous to the way a musician sets out his/her instrument ready for a concert performance. It shows a precise and final disposition of perfectly balanced forms, giving a rich complex effect. It also appears to have both utilitarian and aesthetic values. Guided by the theme of the work, the popular *Black Maria,* used in conveying prisoners, offers an embellished reality. Generally, Ndidi Dike appears to

prove that, the essence of art creation is not necessarily the imitation of nature, but the expressive organization of lines, shapes, and colours to communicate ideas.

Nkechi Nwosu Igbo (b.1973)

Nkechi Nwosu-Igbo was born on 29th September 1973 at Onitsha in Anambra state. Before her primary education, the artist's creative ability was noticed and encouraged by her parents. After her primary and secondary school education, she went to University of Nigeria, Nsukka from 1992 to 1997 where she specialized in painting. She is a professional studio artist and practises in Lagos. Nkechi is a member of many professional associations, and has taken part in several groups and solo exhibitions. At the beginning of her professional career, Nkechi appeared to manifest bias and containment with the Nsukka School's preferred *Uli* art forms. Not long after, however, she found herself increasingly becoming unsatisfied using particular medium and style.

Personal constant experiment and practice, using different media, led her to the discovery of vast range of creative possibilities. This did not only help her gain proficiency, but made her to develop her own style of art expression. To satisfy her curiosity, the artist experimented by mixing together unfamiliar elements. Nkechi confims that, composing with different elements, opens up unique aesthetic opportunities, far different from composing with a single medium. The artist, like other experimental artists, agrees that her being an artist is a divine call. Thus, to make positive impact in the life of the viewer, she employs diverse media and styles that would stimulate the imagination to enable them see new facets in the widely varied world of possibilities. Nkechi's art is categorized into paintings, installations, poems and interior decorations, all geared towards opening new concepts and aesthetic appreciation. She has exhibited far and wide in these categories, and intended to do

more. Nkechi also promotes the activities of artists through organizing exhibitions, seminars and workshops.

Nkechi's vision of art forms is rooted in the feeling that the forms, whether natural or man-made, can have an inherent personality. Thus, she instead develops pictorial structure that is rare, for her expressions. This approach seems to place the artist in the central stream of experimental artists among others. Most of her works dwell on the principle of *Creating or Erasing Space*, a concept she developed to address emotional balance or its imbalance in people. The artist explained that, anything which alters a 'content' to represent something else, may cause joy or pain. The idea was a built-up from an earlier concept known as *Heart Space*, which made reference to those gaps in man's hearts that needed to be positively filled. Nkechi has exploited this philosophy, using unconventional materials of the fast changing technological world to investigate issues of concern. She states, "Over the years, my works have investigated casualties and pains in different ways… I focus on women and children as casualties of discrimination and war". Nkechi Nwosu believes that, some of the messages of her works can best be understood in installation works. To achieve this, she combined her interior decorative experience and painting expertise, to assembled bottles of different sizes and shapes for her composition as seen in the installation work, titled "Message in A Battle" (Plate XXXI).



Plate XXXI
Message In A Battle, Nkechi Nwosu, Paper, Text and Wood, ear, 2003. photograph by the researcher, 10/7/2013.

Bottles, in their different inherent colours, are arranged on a shiny and reflective floor, leaving moderate spaces in-between them. The arrangement is devoid of the sizes and colours. While, few of the bottles appear full with their content, many have their content emptied. Each bottle balances on its base where a tiny line appears to be drawn, reflecting symmetrical images. This is the function of strong light above the head of the viewer onto the transparent battles, and the reflective floor combined to emit the rich images. Strong narrow straight light cast directly on the viewer's gaze, outmatched the depth of the battles, giving rise to dazzling effect. At the bottom, where the bottles are based, the illusion is apparent. Although, the illusive images are not clear, they seem to optically increase and expand the size of the work, making it more kinetic and complex. The juxtaposed bottles, the space in between them and the reflection, seem to combine to present a passionate expression of the principle of dualism, where life has its opposite side.

The work is perhaps a metaphor of a society as exemplified in the inequality displayed by the sizes, spaces, colours and the characters of the bottles. Thus, the messages from the composition may be spontaneous. The discarded bottles, in their apparent variation, jointly reflects the same composition, although lacks the quality of the reality. Therefore, it is the tangible that leads the eyes to the discovery of the dramatic effect of reality once it is not erased. Hence, emotional balance is achieved when all things work together in the atmosphere of peace.

Nkechi's rigorous pursuit of uniqueness sometimes led into creating works that present some seemingly intrigued characters. Her works are predominated by conceptual unity in new artistic language where the visual experience of the world is interpreted in different ways. Sometimes, she compose works in a manner to, reveal hidden beauty that sometimes engage one's intellect or touch one's emotion directly in a simple language. The artist sees life as having its opposite side that humbles one's ego. The artist believes that ignorance makes some people to think condition of life, should remain permanent as long as it favours them. Photographic images were thought to be ideal elements of representing permanency of the visual world, yet, this could be altered. The artist concludes that man is but, a candle in the wind which is visible now, but invisible tomorrow. Every opportunity should be exploited to put together every talent for the service of humanity.

To illustrate this visually, the artist derives great joy when, materials of all kinds and techniques are evolved. In most cases, conventional sense of building up ideal compositions was not followed by the artist. The artist admitted that, art should exist in its independent realm. For her expression, the materials are deliberately brought together, perhaps to strike a balance between success and failure in life. Some of these compositions, convey messages covered in ambiguity as seen in the composition titled "I am 43 Going 12" (Plate XXXII).



Plate XXXII
I Am 43 Going 12, Nkechi Nwosu, Bamboo, Glass, Sand, Rope Paper, Candle and Plastic Height, 186 cm, 2003 Photograph by the researcher.

The compositional space in Plate XXXII above, is defined by two unequal bamboo sticks erected vertically on emulsion plastic containers as their base. A rope is tied across the two bamboo sticks that, looks almost akin goal-post of children's football field. Clean printed pictures containing different images are neatly arranged with pegs, across the rope. In another development, part of the same papers are, scattered on the ground just below those hanged, and mud, ashes, candles wax, sand and other elements spread on top of the papers. The artist makes the eyes move round a rectangular space. The viewer is compelled to relate the loosely hang papers to those covered with dirt. Lit candles arranged in two rows, are placed on top of the soaked papers, offering the viewer, opposite extreme sides.

Neither the composition nor its theme provides sufficient direction to what the work is set to establish. The viewer is therefore left to draw conclusion base on the characteristics presented by the work. The composition seems to be a remainder that not all artworks, end

up their functions in their aesthetic appeals, but, the impact they create. Life and death appears to stair the viewer directly in the face, perhaps to remain the viewer that, it is possible in life to occupy higher platform, but cannot be there endless. Generally, the work appears to re-echo a much more radical relationships, not only in joy, but also in mitigated sorrow.

Considering the fact that the artist's free imagination lies deep in his or her consciousness to make available new realities, the mind of the artist is always set on self-revelation of the unseen images. In exercising this freedom of imagination, Nkechi created works to move the human mind to the fact that, no one lives in isolation, and the concept that encourages interdependency and peaceful co-existence as exemplified in the work "My Life is in You" (Plate XXXIII).



Plate XXXIII

My Life Is In You, Nkechi Nwosu, Acrylic and Wood Dust on Canvas, 102x84 cm, 2002. Exhibition Catalogue 10/7/2013.

The painting (Plate XXXIII) was executed in combination of acrylic and wood dust with expressionistic dexterity. Here, forms of different unrelated geometric shapes, sizes and designs closely laid, are brought together into unexpected unity. The forms are shifted almost at the center of the heavily textured canvas. Leaving at the top, a considerable gap from the margin below, is a wide space free of forms. Two long narrow rectangular bars are depicted to enclose much more delicate designs, symbolic of ranks in the army forces. The lower bar is painted in bright creamy colour, followed by the painting of other symbols with other colours ranging from pink to light green. Extra time seems to be taken in defining the shapes and the beauty of the symbols using deep dark hue. The embellished symbols seem to be the center of attention. At the background of the work however, a dull creamy-green hue was used with patches of dark colour which appears, hastily dropped all over the surface of the work.

Apart from the fact that, the texture gives a deeply pleasurable visual experience, the seemingly camouflage paint application, the symbolic designs and the theme of the work, tend to create the impression of military scenario. The work is probably metaphorical of African landscape punctuated with military uniforms of different ranks, a demonstration of security verse insurgency. The composition appears to be the artist's way of inspiring peace and love as against hate and despaired.

Peaceful co-existence is an inevitable ingredient of national development which past leaders fought to bequeath to their children. Therefore, the country ought to co-exist devoid of discrimination, either on the ground of socio-political, economic, religious or gender differences. Nkechi used her creative ability to visually express the idea, and in the process, the artist became eloquently radical in the choice of materials, characters, and the method of expression. An example is the painting titled "Beyond Silence" (Plate XXXIV).

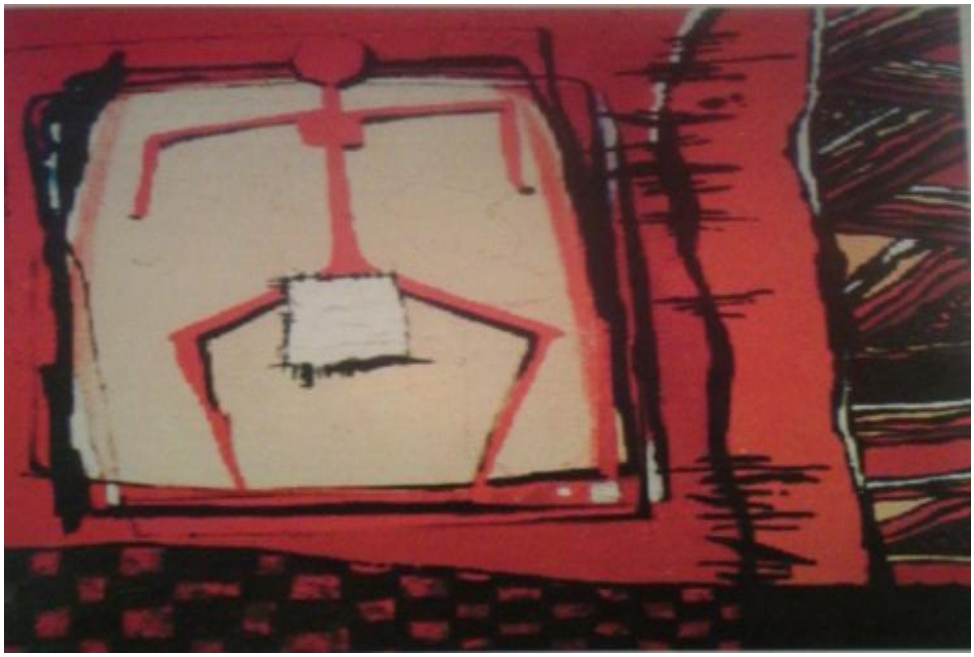


Plate XXXIV
Beyond Silence, Nkechi Nwosu,
Acrylic, Cloth and Wood, 4x76cm 2001.
From Exhibition Catalogue.

Pieces of cloth and wood were mounted on the canvas creating an uneven surface. The work (Plate XXXIV) is painted in dominantly red hue, punctuated by slash of ultramarine colour, applied in long brush strokes. Shifted almost to the left hand corner of the canvas, is an expression of a stick-like-looking human figure with features similar to that of a woman. Perhaps to make the figure clearer, a brighter colour is applied in a square shape immediately behind human figure. Hard edge line is further applied to further define the image. Just immediately on the left side of the female figure, are vertical, yet wobbling lines in dark tones, as if complimenting the akimbo posture of the woman. At the far right hand corner of the canvas, undulating shape seems to be aggressively applied, creating space for the red colour to radiate its emotional quality. The head of the female figure, which appears to over-shoot the screen-like rectangular shape, shows her two hands wide spread, exposing her small size breasts to the viewer. Her open thighs further make much more visible, small starchy-looking linen used to cover her nakedness.

The work seems not to convey a single meaning, but layers of meanings. The work appears to be the artist's visual protest against a societal structure that favours male chauvinism. The artist thinks that, women for sometimes have played the second fiddle, therefore, she uses the style of her art creations as an advocacy to correct the imbalance. Again, the female folk, irrespective of age, are vulnerable to rape. These, among many, are beyond silence as the theme suggests.

Nkechi Nwose's consistency in creating works that robustly confront the issue of gender differences among other issues has continued to assume distinct dimension. She believes that it takes boldness to locate and use unique materials and styles to make statement that can be easily understood by the viewer. She maintains that, her experimental styles of using uncommon materials to effectively communicate the public of another angle of looking at issues in her work entitled "Not Ready to Walk Away".(Plate XXXV)



Plate XXXV
Not Ready to Work Away, Nkechi Nwosu,
A pair of old scissors, assorted coloured paper,
2012. Exhibition Catalogue.

The square shape canvas (Plate XXXV), was covered in deep dark colour with blazing red, applied, which seems to push the dark background to the boundary of the canvas. A scissors-shape metal, skillfully wrapped with brilliant and harmonious colours are depicted to effectively occupy the surface of the canvas. Its handles are stretched towards the upper part of the canvas, while the lower part of the scissors is made to face the lower part of the canvas. The entire arrangement appears to present what looks like a figure of an energetic well built-up figure without a visible head with what also looks like two hands suspended in the air as if in celebration. Again, the lower part of the scissors looks like human legs wide spread as if maintaining balance.

A close study of the composition, the poignant collage piece of work, besides being the subject matter, presents a night experience far more than fire work, but it seems to be an acknowledgement of cheers from a crowd covered by thick darkness. Ironically, Nkechi's work seems not only exhibits a deviant grandstanding against the daunting odds that featured poetic phrases, but also directs the eyes not only to analyse combatant, but also re-echoes the creative and aesthetic potentials of the discarded elements.

Nsikak Essien (b.1957)

Nsikak Essien was born on the 20th December 1957. After his primary school in Lagos, Port-Harcourt and Calabar, from 1970-1975, he proceeded to Holy Family College, Abak, Akwa Ibom state. His creative ability was developed when he attended the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, where he graduated with a distinction in painting as the best student. He has worked at his Alma-Mata as lecturer since 1980-1991 till he opted to be a full-time professional studio artist and settles in Lagos in 1991 till date. A member of several professional bodies, Nsikak has taken part in groups and solo exhibitions both within and outside Nigeria.

The artist has explored extensively with conventional materials, at a point, he opted to investigate the visual world with diverse materials as he was quoted to have said, "I have been in the mixed media land experimenting in diverse materials and art forms…I sought to liberate my painting from the prison of two- dimensionality, I hungered to see art rise up from the board and walk, dance, to back flips and sing".

Nsikak Essien's creative strength is best revealed in his myriads of numerous experiments with different media through which expression in different styles are made. He considers himself a born again Christian and creature wonderfully created with a specific mission to execute, according to the purpose of God. He emphasises that, he has an account to render and would not want to squander the opportunity assigned to him. Thus, his faith has affected the choice of his materials, techniques and the themes of his works. The artist thinks that the spiritual dimension of his works has become his reality. His belief is that, what one sees as reality, is an outer wear, the inner wear, is the reality. His art creations therefore focus on this realty. He sees a golden opening to use his creative power to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to his viewers. This principle informs the philosophy of Nsikak's current paintings, although, he addressed socio-political and environmental issues.

Nsikak has produced forms using mixed media in narrative and descriptive realism with little distortion of forms as a style. He pointed out that, his paintings evolve from his experience of the environment. He thinks that, the spiritual dimension to his works, has increasingly become obvious as he strives to make them visually visible. He created works geared towards setting the man free from the kingdom of darkness. This is demonstrated in the painting titled "Unframed Halleluiah" (Plate XXXVI).

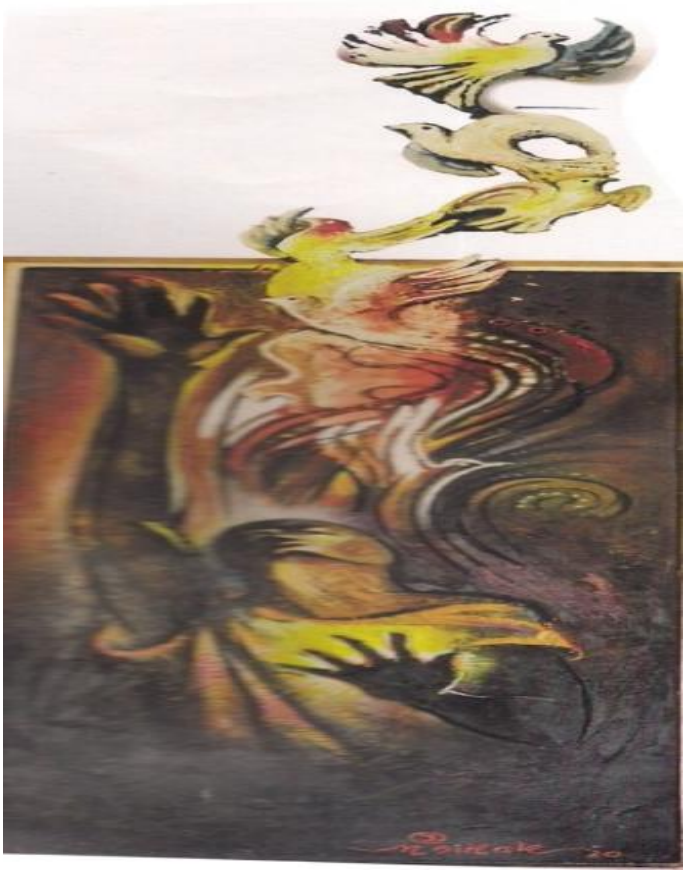


Plate XXXVI
Unframed Halleluiah, Nsikak Essien, Mesh, Rod, Wood and paint, 2011. Photograph by the researcher, 9/7/2013.

Wire mesh, rods, and pieces of wood were used to create texture on the canvas (XXXVI). The figure was executed on the entire working space with diligence and detail. The head is depicted tilted to the right, while looking up with firmly closed up eyes. The right hand is raised towards heaven, while the left hand, spreads on the chest of the figure that suggests a praying moment. Birds were depicted in a zigzag interval just above the head. The birds are rendered to overfly the working space with their wings wide spread as in action. Paint that reflects evening situation, is used to cover the surface of the work. Above the head, a mellow glowing light is rendered to interplay on the chest and the right hand of the seemingly praying warrior.

The deeply tied draperies on the right hand of the human figure, believed to be a man, and the silhouette left hand appear to suggest a tense and fervent prayer session. The way the birds are represented to overshoot the picture plane is not clear, but the rendition seems to portray the birds descending and ascending, a sign the prayer has immediate impact. The artist states that God still has concern for the affairs of men perhaps; this makes the Nigerians to be highly religious. The work appears to suggest that, the option opened to Nigerians in the face of the myriads of problems bedeviling the land, is prayer.

Nsikak Essien was often concerned that peace has continued to elude parts of the Nigeria especially the north eastern part of the country. In his visual reaction to the senseless killings, he selected suitable materials that he thinks could, visually communicate with his viewers. In his visual narration, he has tried to capture every detail of what he thought was the reality, as can be seen in the work titled "Living in Nigeria" (Plate XXXVII).



Plate XXXVII
Living in Nigeria, Nsikak Essien, Wire, Enamel and oil paint, 2012, Photograph by the researcher on 9/7/2013.

Perhaps, because the artist wanted his viewers to catch a glimpse of what he had seen, the images in Plate XXXVII above are rendered in as realistic as he could. The seemingly emotion soaked work, appears approached with aggressive immediacy as if he was trying to avoid being a casualty himself. The open and uneven landscape, is vigorously treated in combination of long sweeping brush strokes, reflecting sun-set. The seemingly hasty sky being enveloped by stormy dark sky, emits combination of red and orange blazing light towards the horizon. The range at the far distant, where some horse riders are seen probably keeping watch and where most action is concentrated, suggests a valley. Shreds from the brush strokes lay almost diagonally appears transformed into human skulls. Slightly above the bottom left, is leafless tree with scattered branches which bend a little towards the right hand corner of the canvas.

Vultures, in their usual characteristics of exercising patient, patch at the limited branches of the tree at the bottom left hand corner of the canvas waiting. At the middle of the canvas therefore, are skulls of human beings littering the ground, a sign that the death toll is unimaginably great. At the bottom right hand corner of the canvas, is a fierce looking horse and its rider galloping towards the viewer. Hung around on the neck of the horse, is what looks like a bag containing skulls, while much more appear crashed under the legs of the horse. The awkwardly depicted charging horse at the extreme right side of the canvas, opens wide its eyes, nose and mouth, an obvious sign of exhaustion. The horse rider throws his head backwards, lifts high his right hand with what looks like the flag of Nigeria in the air, perhaps a demonstration of victory.

When the citizens of a country understand their differences, they happily join force to confront their daily challenges as it seems to be exemplified by the work titled "Happiest People 2" (Plate XXXVIII)



Plate XXXVIII
Happiest People 2, Nsikak Essien, Wood and enamel paint
Sizes not given, 2012.
Photograph by the researcher on 9/7/2013.

Human faces captured at closed range are seemed depicted in combination of enamel paint with slices of wood in different sizes (Plate XXXVIII). Exuberant faces in splendid laughter are super-imposed on the picture plain in such a way that the vision of the viewer is blocked from seeing beyond the faces. How the artist captured the faces from their noses to their chins is not clear, but perhaps it is to express how happy people are. The one rendered on the left hand corner of the canvas, seems to express himself fully by opening wide his mouth, exposes his entire teeth with his tongue twitches backward as his head, almost overlapped the face of his colleague. On the other hand, the one on the right, leans on the other and manages a smile. Balance is achieved through effective distribution of colours of different tones.

The two faces obviously carry faces of happiness, but ironically, the materials and the technique employed, present a picture of wreckage, as an accident scene and evoke an extremely sad moment. This appears a total departure from what constitutes happiness, particularly when the faces seem pieced by the same pieces of wood, and the seeming harsh brush strokes application. Nigerians are not intimidated by the challenges ahead, but are poised to overcoming it, the work appears to suggest.

Nsikak thinks some of his art expressions were not his personal concept, but admits, he received divine inspiration each time he runs out of ideas. This is most dramatically played out in the work titled "Love Story: Sacrifice" (Plate XXXIX).



Plate XXXIX

Love Story: Sacrifice, Nsikak Essien wood, Sand-dust, Jut-Bag and Chalk on Canvas, 2013.
Photograph by the researcher on 9/7/2013.

The work (Plate XXXIV) is composed by simple quick outline in chalk, charcoal, patches of cloth and jut-bags. The two figures are depicted in a profile position as they both walk out of

the canvas. Perhaps to reflect an ideal father and son, the artist terminated the work at sketch level with many inaccurate lines in pastel and chalk, wandering on the surface of the canvas. Responding to why the work was left uncompleted at this stage, the artist admitted that he was most fulfilled and fascinated, when the work is left at this stage. He stressed that, the manner the message came and the immediacy, with which the work was executed, has made the work completely different from any of his works so far. The dramatic work features a struggling father putting up a false smile behind his son who is contented and unaware of what his father was passing through as they both walk to school. Despite his seemingly disadvantage position, the father proudly walks satisfactorily behind his son with the old jut-bag loosely hung around the challenging angle of his waist as he escorts the child to school. The father has given up what was to his comfort and enjoyment, for his child's education. The painting appears to be the artist's way of calling on parents, that despite their poor financial status, nothing can be too big to be sacrificed for the education of the child. Nsikak notes that children are special gifts and should not be seen as liabilities particularly when the going is rough.

The artist sometimes creates work to express his dissatisfaction of the styles of governance in the country. He thinks that no leader comes to be in a place of responsibility without divine approval of God. He feels that it is not the beginning of a matter but the end, where accountability will be rendered. The work that seems to take a sweep at leadership, is seen in his painting titled "Leadership" Plate. XL



Plate XL
Leadership, Nsikak Essien, wire mesh,
Sawdust, body filler and acrylic paint,
2012. From the artist, 9/7/2013.

The artist effectively combined different materials such as sawdust, wire mesh, body filler and acrylic paint to depict ceramic wares in different sizes perhaps a metaphor of the political structure of the country. The composition (Plate XL) is shifted to the left hand side of the canvas. The highly decorated pots, depicted in bend positions, are arranged to form an almost triangular shape with the bigger pot being at the peak. Each of the smaller containers has holes at the middle through which supply from the bigger pot into a central container which looks like a drum is made. They in turn empty their content into what looks like a bottomless sea. None of the containers seem to show sign of exhaustion, perhaps because of the continuous supply from the bigger and central container.

The entire composition appears to be a symbolic expression of the distribution pattern of the national wealth as presided by the federal government, rhetorically represented by the bigger container. The drum symbolizes the means through which all resources are collected and equitably distributed to other arms of governance, as demonstrated in the in composition.

The diligent and effective colour treatment of the entire composition, appears to propel and energize the gashing out of the resources from the various containers. The placement of the containers is not covered in obscurity, probably a sign of transparency as always emphasized by every government as it comes, on board to power. Sooner than later, the government renegades in its commitment. Nsikak Essien noted with concern, how corruption over the years has been institutionalized.

Sussan Ogeyi Omagu (b.1973)

Sussan Ogenyi Omagu was born on the 1st April 1973 at Ukpah Bekwarra, Cross River state. Having completed her primary and secondary school education, she read Fine Arts at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where she specialized in painting in 1995. She currently works with National Gallery for Art (NGA). She has taken part in groups and solo exhibitions both within and outside the country. Sussan is a member of many professional organizations.

The artist admitted that she has a sense of fulfillment, when she ended up reading Fine Arts and specialized in painting. She stated that, when she was much younger, she developed passion for colourful materials and was in the habit of gathering, and keeping such materials of assorted colours. Moving these materials from their accustomed context to keep them from being destroyed aroused poignancy in her family. According to her, she felt as if she had committed an unforgivable crime, should she walked pass any of the objects unattended to. As she grew older, almost nothing seems to satisfy her than to create images on available space.

The artist's love for colours has over the years been transformed stylistically by the influence of her lecturers as well as her colleagues. The works were characterized by brilliant colours in their strongest intensity. Due to constant experimentation, and

exploration, Sussan discovered and developed different stylistic approaches in her expression which has also reached a level of development in her investigation of the visual world. She was strict in her copy of nature to represent an ideal situation which led her into the use of media such as pastels, coloured pencils, water colour, gouache, and oil paint that became the most favoured. Essentially, Susan has since widened the gamut of her artistic space after putting together experiences acquired and her innovation; she has developed techniques and styles uniquely hers.

In her liberated professional confidence and artistic adventurousness, the artist developed interest in experimenting and exploring with unconventional materials. The artist derived much pleasure when mixtures of materials are put together in a single composition. Commenting on her works, Ikpakronyi (2010) states that Sussan was a mixed media expressionist who experimented with wide range of materials. The researcher observed that Susan's technique of art creation was not only on the upswing, but was assuming a more radical dimension. She sometimes found herself composed works with materials apparently quite irrelevant subject matter, picked from the dumps to create scenes of humorous absurd. Treatments of the materials are often with professional touch that the works do not function in exactly the old context. A whole new realm of stylistic possibility presents itself. The artist explained that she was always contented whenever she expressed herself in strange and unique materials. She thinks that the elements communicate a feeling of reality very different from what has always been experiencing. In entirely different styles, and method, she created series of works in this direction, with the intention to explore a more real way of communicating feelings. An example of the work that exhibits the character of reality of life, beyond the texture of everyday life is in the work titled "Broken Challenge" (Plate XLI).



Plate. XLI
Broken Challenge: Sussan Omagu,
Mixed Media: 79cm x 80cm, 2008.
From Exhibition Catalogue.

The choice of predominantly red hue, to paint the background of the composition (Plate XLI), is perhaps to drag the sensory organs to discover the reality the artist was set to achieve. A man, built up from newspaper in combatant posture seems suddenly, emerged from the blue. Pasted at strategic lower left hand corner of the canvas, is the image of the man surrounded by what looks, like iron rings. The seemingly one- man-riot- squat, appears to throw his left leg and left arm violently forward, while maintaining balance with the right leg and the right hand just as if he is ready for action, A little distance away from the man, is a sign with inscription that "reads bloodshed, death, and anger", among others.

The satirical work is probably depicted to ridicule its subject, yet, it is a reflection of serious issues that have bedeviled the nation in recent times. Perhaps the artist intended to draw the attention of the governments at all levels and the general public to the consequences of the

lack of political will to address vices disturbing Nigerians on daily bases. Such issues as high level corruption, lack of employment, hunger, incessant killings, nepotism, sectionalism, religious bigotry, insurgency, just to mention a few.

The artist is consistent in creating works with themes that vigorously speak against moral injustice and inequality in the society. Sussan notes with bitterness that in Nigeria for instance, a woman cannot stand surety in most cases. The widow has no say over her deceased husband's properties (in some traditions) just as the widow and perhaps her children are left to either swim or sink as the tradition has little concern for them. Again, people rot in police custody without trial, and countless number of such cases. A visual contribution besides other artistic expressions, to ameliorate the situation was conceived by the artist in figurative forms. She adopted simple gestural approach to drive home what she felt was reality as seen in her work titled "And the Man Died" (Plate XLII).



Plate XLII
And the Man Died, Sussan Omagu, Fabric, Enamel and Oil Pain, 2006. Photograph by the researcher 12/5 2013.

Sussan Omagu has confidently combined different methods and styles such as dripping, spatter and pouring techniques to create the work in Plate XLII above. The collage looking painting, is painted in red with patches of orange colour haphazardly juxtaposed on the surface of the canvas. Liquidized white hue was poured and allowed to freely move to assume forms of its own dynamism. Besides the transparent quality the surface displays, it also conveys an almost touchable value. A comparatively narrow band of painted canvas in dark colour with an image of a male figure painted in raw white, is laid horizontally on his back. The artist seems to have taken extra time to go into detail through which features, defining the sex are made. The manner the man is made to lay suggests lifeless situation. Analyzing the undulated edges of the black canvas, one is tempted to think it is perhaps the way the artist depicts a coffin. The motionless body is perhaps prepared for its final burial. Assessing the highly exaggerated stomach to assume a conical shape in contrast to the badly

emaciated parts of the body, seems to portray long suffering. As suggested by the theme of the work, Sussan lamented the atrocities in the country. She had complained bitterly of the rate at which police authority do keep people in detention for long without trial. The artist observes that in the process, many have lost their lives. The work therefore, appears to warn against injustice.

The current posture of the federal government of Nigeria to fight corruption at all levels and at all fronts, is a welcome development. Different regimes had promised tackling corruption, but most of such promises ended up at the drawing board. The masses seem to be fed up with the empty promises often made by the political activists. Certainly, if drastic action is not taken to address the issues of corruption, more Nigerians may just remain mere spectators in the Nigerian project as indicated in the work titled "Faces" (Plate XLIII).



Plate XIII
Faces, Sussan Omagu; enamel and oil paint:
2009: Exhibition Catalogue 12/5/2015.

In the work above, is another liquidized technique approach in which the background is painted in darker hue perhaps, to create an indoor impression of a long period of being in

dungeon without any ray of light. The artist depicted human form with mask-like heads pushing curiously towards the viewer. The massive crowd appears to be stopped by a seemingly strong horizontal barricade. Liquidized painting techniques which Sussan seems to be fascinated in, is used to erect the strong iron looking barrier. The spillage of the combination of white and red hues that freely flow vertically, appears to further fortify the fence where caricature looking people are incarcerated. The artist confirmed the willful distortion of her human figures as her expression of ideal human forms. The stylistically depicted forms are arranged horizontally behind the iron bar. Immediately behind the human heads, are densely organized images in angular and rectilinear shapes.

Gazing further, the figures' faces and their the body language, the people are not only curious, but an unprecedented excitement seems to be written all over their faces as they seem to struggle to catch a glimpse of what was going on outside their confinement. The high barricade and the thick darkness at the background, block the viewer from estimating the number of the people behind the bar. The work appears to be a metaphor of the Nigerian political class who promise of every good thing during electioneering campaigns, only for the same electorates in their numbers, continue their lives in the prison courtyards of poverty, non-employment, insecurity among many. The people behind the bar merely, watch from their place of confinement as the wealth of their dear country is being looted, the painting seems to suggest.

Sussan Omagu seems to have dedicated substantial part of her work in this study to fighting injustice. She is consistent in distorting forms and leading the eyes to see another form of human representation. The innovative approach continued to witness different aggressive and complex nature. The artist for instance, decries the rate at which people are deprived of

their source of livelihood. She appears to focus her attention on the riverine areas as exemplified in her painting titled “Encased” (Plate XLIV).



Plate XLIV
Encased, Sussan Omagu, papers, enamel and paint,
50cm x 52 cm, 2007,
photograph by the researcher on the 12/5/2013.

The work “Encased” is skillfully executed in mixed media of wire strings, paper, enamel and oil paint. Human figures of adults and children are depicted suggestively in standing position at the center of the canvas. Horizontal and vertical plat forms were constructed a little above the water upon which the people seem to hang, probably to escape from being drown. The people in unusually red clothes appear, to gather under a not well constructed shed, may be to avoid being soaked in what looks like a torrential rain resulting in flood. The air is saturated with metallic and golden colours. The artist depicted the people facing one direction, while backing the viewer, as their attention seems to be focused on their properties. What looks like the remains of buildings in their dilapidated stages and other ephemeral domestic objects, not properly defined, are rendered almost swept off completely.

This is in addition to the incessant oil spillage that has cut off the people's source of livelihood.

The artist observed that the people of the Niger Delta, from where the bulk of the wealth of the nation comes, have suffered considerable neglect. The outcome of this is increase in crime rate with its attendant consequences. The painting seems to advocate for the restoration of the dignity of Niger Delta and their environment.

Sussan has never hidden her strong desire and unquenchable thirst to investigate the visual world guided by the radical use of unfamiliar media. She goes into it with outmost doggedness not minding the consequences. To her, the excitement derived at the end of every work, is a morale booster to her. One of such works is titled "Fusion 1" (Plate XLV).



Plate XLV
Fusion, Sussan Omagu, wood/CDS,
Size not given 2013: Photograph by the researcher on the 12/5/2013.

In the plate above, a piece of wood measured and carved in different geometric shapes was carefully glued on a panel. The joints and the gaps in between them, graciously formed part of the composition. A shiny diskette, the only conspicuous odd material in the composition, is mounted on the upper part of the composition near the left side of the panel. The many

irregular lines created by the joints carry the eyes in a continuous movement round the work where unclear forms seem to emerge. While one tries to associate a shape following the joints with any familiar object, interruption seems to emerge from another joint. The arrangement of the undulated forms and the subsequent joining of all the parts, appear to present an enraged and fierce looking cock facing the left corner of the panel. Another shape that appears to emerge from the assemblage, is a seemingly wild looking rat struggling with an unknown object. The unique arrangement is the fact that, images keep emerging as the eyes and the mind try to find meaning to the composition.

Despite the differences in shapes, the links of the different parts are built-up into one composition. Sussan seems not only to see aesthetic possibility inherent in the amalgamation of art and technology, but people of different backgrounds. Again, she appears to also suggest that, artists should oscillate between the studio and the factory for more startle innovative outcome.

Analysis of the Artist's Works

The researcher articulates the individual studies that have been made on the artists, based on the materials appropriated for the expressions. This part of the analysis proceeds by (i) the artistic backgrounds of the artists (already discussed alongside the works of the artists understudy from pages 35-124), (ii) the motivation in executing the works, (iii) the artists' courage in the art creations, (iv) the thematic concerns of the artists' expression (v) analysis the artists' works and (vi) draw conclusion from the findings and suggesting direction of which creation of art works should take as regards to the use of materials. This method is carefully chosen in order to achieve the specific objectives of this study.

Motivation in creating art works

The study examined the roles played by motivations in the creative abilities of the artists under study. A popular German philosopher, Kant (2015), defines extrinsic and intrinsic aesthetic as the science which deals with the condition of sensory perception whose appreciation is founded on feeling or pleasure or conclusion on objects of aesthetic value. The author states that extrinsic motivation moves people to stick to a task to meet up with a standard set by another. Ervin (2014) alludes to this, when she states that the factor that motivates is no longer there, the individual remains uninspired and frustration sets in. The authors agree that intrinsic motivation, spurs people from within, to spend much more time on a task whose outcome is considered more than what was before. The individual does his own thing and at his own pace.

Interacting with the artists under study during the fieldwork, there creative transmutations started from their individual families and gradually went through different stages of learning with art as their chosen and loved subjects. Motivated by individual models and their teachers, the artists under study, stuck to tasks assigned them to meet up with standards set from their various schools. At the tertiary levels, the selected artists who include Ayo Adewunmi, Ayo Aina, Ikechukwu Francis, Jerry Buhari, Mabel Chukwu, Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu Igbo, Nsikak Essien and Sussan Ogenyi Omagu went through trainings in different Art Schools, at different periods. They grew to the various levels under the tutelages of their various lecturers. They were enthralled by nature and the art expression of other accomplished artists, therefore, the desire to copy nature and other's work was strong on the process of executing their assigned tasks. The extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation plays major role in shaping the aesthetic values of the artists. Ramu Mukherjeer one of America's popular mixed media artists worked to equal the standard of other artists. The artist under study, also worked to equal the standard of their mentors.

The study observed that after graduation, the artists individually felt a need to go beyond what they were expressing before. Some of them started creating works, without specific meanings (abstract). Consequently, at different periods, they willing opted out to explored and experimented with different unconventional (waste) material at their various locations. While some of them see their creative transmutation as a freedom from years of artistic tutelage and parental dependency, others see this as a turning point of their creative dexterity. Ervin (2014), in her study on how to stay creatively fuelled, notes states that Positive Psychologists (Christopher Peterson and Martin Seiligman) observes that personal discovery improves one's overall well-being and happiness. That it helps individual to capitalize on one's unique character and leads to more fulfilled career. The works of the artists under study creative in different unconventional materials show obvious sign of creative freedom.

The radical departure from conventional mode of expression has given way to the use of more robust, varied unconventional materials, and fresh idea in their individual expression. The artists continued to display sufficient competence and inventive concepts where they each derived different levels of satisfactions. Ervin (2014), seems to agree with this position when she states that, inner motivation stimulates creativity and enable the artist to truly create excellent works. The artists under study appear to shun creating works in tangible level of adorations to please others. The artists individually, derive different levels of satisfaction as they continue to evolve newer materials and styles.

Interrogation of the Artists' Courage in Art Creations

Art history has shown that changes in art creation, is inherent. The changes can be subtle, yet it has some measure of radicalism. Reactions in different ways always accompany such works. Change in whatever form, particularly among conservative artists, are never a

welcome development. For instance, when Freedgood (1974), compares Gilbert Stuart's and Jackson Pollock's works, she notes that Gilbert, a Realist Painter was able to catch the true character of people in his paintings as a process of seeing nature with his own eyes. Due to his faithfulness to nature, it was said of him that, no one copied his works, but instead, copied his eyes. On the contrary, Jackson Pollock who was born much later came into art scene long after Gilbert had died, produced works without figures, no landscape, no shapes or any recognizable forms. The author posits that, Gilbert Stuart, would have been so shocked and angered by Pollock's painting technique, if he had seen them. Pollock's works were derided and laughed at by the public. It was after his death, that he was firmly established as one of the leading figures of the most complete change in the history American art.

In a similar development, Jari (1994), while reflecting on the pain of rejection, the artist goes through, states thus:

> *To me, it appears that for an artist to be fully initiated as a professional, she/he has to suffer a certain excruciating pain at least once the pain of rejection… we have heard of a press gag. There is also the art gag, a situation where a gallery prohibits some works from being shown to the public. Ironically, most of the gallery juries (usually the owners of the galleries) are not artists themselves but they believe they possess the where withal to discern good works their yardstick being the commercial viability of works. The result of this, simply started, is the mortgaging of a society artistic future for a few dollars and the fabrication of souvenir artists.*

This appears an apparent call for artists to be courageous and resist the temptation that make them succumb to pressure capable of cutting short or derailing them from their professional callings. Ervin (2014) states, that seeking out new problem for the artist, challenges his skills, harnesses his uncertainty and fuels his brilliancy. Gushem (2005), having observed how an art work, created with unconventional materials, attracts negative comments, and advises that artists ought to be freed from conventional restrains. The author opines that the artist should be independent in thought, and action to choose the media for their expressions.

The artists under study are renown and accomplished in their creative practices in unconventional materials in their various locations. For instance, at the time of the research, Jerry Buhari and Ayo Aina live and practice in Kaduna state. Sussan Ogenyi Omagu practices in Bauchi state, Mabel Chukwu lives and practices in Abuja while Ayo Adewunmi live and practices in Enugu. Ikechukwu francis live and creates his works in Port-Harcourt. Nsikak Essien, Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu Igbo all live and create their works in Lagos. All the artists stroll the streets of their immediate environment scrounging, scavenging, digging, picking and collecting waste materials, from the sites of their last abodes, for their art expression.

Commenting on the materials and techniques used in their art creation, they all express different levels of satisfaction. For instance, Jerry Buhari states, that he finds the unconventional materials more eloquent and visually, impactful. Also, because they are unconventional, he gets this feeling that they are free from preconceived expectation. The artist wants his work to first speak to an audience for interaction. To him, this gives birth to his satisfaction. Ayo Adewunmi feels, besides personal self-satisfaction, he is convinced that there is wealth in thrash thus, his persistence in Waste-To-Art workshop, founded in 2005. He and his colleagues of like-minds feel the need to embark on public enlightenment of its potential. The workshop, which is being organised round the country, has been staged in major tertiary institutions of Nigeria. Ikechukwu Francis, an exponent of e-waste art style, is fascinated when the assorted discarded electronic items were gathered from their last abodes into his studio. The discarded electronics were made to play in concert with other items and assumed new life that could outlive its creator (the artist). His works are created mostly to confront the manner by which the sub-standard electronics are indiscriminately dumped in third-world countries by the developed nations.

Sussan Omagu, on her part, was always in search for an unmatched means of reaching out to the general public. Hence, she sees her current art style in continuous dramatic gestures, as an opportunity to aggressively fight injustices and other vices that have bedevilled the country. Mabel Chukwu on the other hand, devoted her brilliantly painted works entirely for the liberation of the womanhood from a society structured to favour men chauvinism. The artist confirmed that her works will continue with the advocacy till the woman gains her rightful place in the society. In the case of Ayo Aina, there was a shift from once highly decorated sensual beauty, painted in different stylistic strokes to highly conceptual art creations. The artist held the unconventional materials he used in high esteem, and considered them as rich menu of creation. The artist deliberately portrayed the works with little or no perceived material beauty, but created them with thought provoking powerful messages of national and international concerns. Ayo's concern was not what people feel about the works, but what impacts have the works made. Ndidi Dike and Nkechi Nwosu both have ideas with their creations from absurd to natural formalism; thus, they delightfully make references to inanimate world as ideal way of expressions. Didi Dike manipulated the objects as ideal media to eulogize Lagos the former seat of power and economic hub of Nigeria. Nkechi Nwosu on the other hand, went further to give her works strangely precious and sacred aura. The artist deliberately creates spaces in her compositions to emphasize pains that go with it when alteration is made. Her works convey ambiguity that seems to thrill the air.

Considering the artistic antecedences of the artists under study, their popularities in inventive art expressions, using unconventional materials, have gone far beyond what they were used to. The artists maintain that unconventional materials appear more expressive with stronger visual power. The independent choice of materials, and techniques, by the artists under study, has brought to the fore their doggedness. They individually exert

courageous approach in doing the art making, sometimes, combined conscious planning with intuition as long as they were contented. They confirm that unconventional materials particularly, have given them feeling of liberation, and freedom from conventions of traditional materials. They individually derived different levels of satisfactions.

The Thematic concerns of the artists' works.

Wikipedia (2016), explains that, themes are ideas conveyed by visual experience. Themes differ from motifs which are elements of the content in the work of art. Themes arise from the interplay of plot, characters, and the conclusion; the artist perceived the work has impacted on him. The same work may be given another theme by another artist. Charman and Ross (2002) in their research, observes that curriculum design for art and design pays scant attention to meaning-making in visual art. They note that, the eclectic and exclusive nature of art making today poses a number of challenges. The authors reiterate the need to interpret the work art as necessary tool negotiate our world of visual complexity and richness.

Art scholars like Getlien (2002), Saliu (2005), Gushem (2005), Stockstad (2008) among others, in their elaborate studies at different times, write and allude to the dynamic nature of art creation, pointing out that art expression has continued to pushed beyond the traditional art boundaries and assuming more complex nature. Artists exercise their freedom of expression by evolving media, and techniques of their choice in art creations. Sometimes, art creations convey feelings that make no specific reference to any known forms. For instance, the Surrealists and Dadaists juxtaposed incongruous elements in their expressions, which sometimes provoked shiver of strangeness prompting lots of questions by the public. A well-articulated theme often helps in understanding work composed with incongruous materials as suggested by Charman and Ross (ibid).

The thematic concerns and the messages from the works of the selected artists evolve around socio-political, economic, religious and environmental issues. The reviewed works of the individual artists under study categorized and analysed alongside the thematic concerns thus;

(i) **Ayo Adewumi**

Ayo Adewumi has initiated works which addressed some social-political issues in the country. For instance, the works titled *Child Trafficking,* is completely an abstract composition with shades of paint in liquid stage poured on the surface of the canvas to create impression. The intention for creating the work in such a technique can be interpreted only by the artist, or the viewer will be opened to any conclusion based on the impact of the work on him. Another work, titled *Overshadow* exhibits recognisable symbols of different species of birds seen through screen-like windows. Each of the scenes presents unique characters of birds without them conscious of the activities of others. What looks like the subject-matter in the composition, is a bigger bird depicted in flight, while carrying the other birds along. The work is better understood through its theme. The work titled *Precious,* is a bird, created with fruits of different plants clearly presents natural formalism and requires no much interpretation. *This House is Not Falling,* is another work constructed with discarded can drinks, in their various designs. The work presents a clear three dimensional structure on a two dimensional surface. The composition, although a satirical building with fragile items, still maintains its balance is self-narrative..

(ii) **Ayo Aina**

Ayo Aina's works in this study, address mainly social, political, and environmental concerns. For instance, the work titled, *Child Trafficking,* composed of different sizes of dummies arranged on a baby drier. The work can hardly be associated with any art creation,

due to the popularity of the objects with children. The ideation behind the work is aids the composition. Similarly, another work *National Cake,* created out of cake placed in a plate surrounded by rat-traps and what looks an iron bar, is made to fence the composition. The theme of the work, has helped cleared a lot of questions that would have arisen, because its strangeness. *Rat Race* is a composition rat-traps and slippers mounted on a painted canvas. The title of the work has shaped the focus of the viewer far beyond its appearance. The works that address environmental issues are *Global Warming* and *Greenhouse Effect,* .are both composed of found domestic objects. The symbolic works together with their themes, further help in evaluation of the works.

(iii) Ikechukwu Francis

The artist adapted mainly discarded electronics as objects and content in his expression. The major areas that his works addressed were socio- economic issues. The examples are seen in his works; 8 *faces and Village Square, E-Cities and Garbage, Emergent Nitizens* and *…and Our City Stretch to the Moon,* are all composed of the discarded electronics, except the titled *Unveiling* created with different media. It is the only work; out of the works reviewed that human mood is captured where a lady is depicted with less impressive face perhaps to demonstrate her displeasure as shown on her face. The theme conceived by the artist makes the interpretation easier. In the other works whose titles are given above, seem to be radically created using discarded circuitry boards to project dilapidated architectural structures. The themes of the works, show that continuous dumping of these electronic, have unpleasant consequences on the environment

(iv) Jerry Buhari

The major areas, addressed by Jerry Buhari's works include politics, socio-economic and the environment issues. The work with the theme *Power Chair* is an installation of an office

chair, surmounted by what looks like stretchers. At the back of the chair, decorated is made with ribbons. Without the theme, the work looks like any other chair, ordinarily kept outside the house. *National Issues* is another work created with threads of different colours. The manner in which the work is displayed, it can easily be mistaken for a textile work on a loom. The concept behind the work is refocused by the theme and its evaluation, become simpler. *Two Women Harvest Corn,* is the theme of one of the works created by Buhari. Fine clay alluvial is used in long sweeping stroke to depict the composition. Its simplicity in term of materials, content and the arrangement of the human figures and the theme, direct the viewer's attention on communal effort. The artist has been compassionate about the environment. He composed works with wooden materials with assorted lid covers and slice wood, to portray the effect of environmental degradation on man. The themes that further help in evaluating the works are, *Decay and Regeneration,* and *Man on Earth and Glittering Chains, Charms and Mystery a Foryager respectively.*

(v) Mabel Chukwu

Mabel Chukwu's works are depicted in abstract forms, with themes directed at socio-political issues affecting the womanhood. The titles of these works include *Continuity, Fake Love*, *Timeless*, *Painful Flow* and *Strength* .are largely executed using acrylic mixed with egg-york and egg-shell. The total abstract nature of the work may make the viewer to make his own conclusion based on what he feels. The artist confirmed that her works are meant to champion the plight of the woman till her role in the society is recognised and appreciated. She however, conceived short and simple themes, to enable the viewer interpret the works. The artist explained that the use of eggs in her works is symbolic of the fragility of the woman. *Fake Love,* calls attention of viewers to how a woman can be taken advantage of, while *Timeless* seems to project the woman as the life wire of her family.

(vi) **Ndidi Dike**

Ndidi Dike's works, created in different materials of different techniques have the following themes *Lagos, Constitution, Entropy of State, Permeations* and *Waka-Into-Bondage the taste of ¼ Mile.* The works were mostly produced in semi-abstract or abstract forms. Understanding the works, is aided by the themes, appropriated by the artist. For instance, the work titled *Lagos* is created with straws in different colours. The painted straws were made to cover the map of Lagos. The work presents a sensuous surface that displays the image of a crocodile. It is the theme that brings the focus on Lagos. In another work titled *constitution* is created out of folded fabric materials. The folded cloth is stretched half-way to create low and high relief impression displayed publicly. The theme helps the viewer to know that constitution is a document of governance, and should be assessable. The artist depicted works with themes that draw attention to social issues, especially the works with themes *Entropy of a State, a-Permeation* and *Waka-Into-Bondage- a taste of ¼ Mile* composed with fabric materials folded neatly, different geometric shapes and wooded material decorated with shiny objects.All the three works present are created in abstract forms. The themes point to social problems encountered when people of different backgrounds are gathered pursuing different agendas, they need one another for success.

(vii) **Nkechi Nwosu**

The artist's works that were reviewed were created line with her philosophy of "Creating and Erasing Space" which dwells emphatically on changes that inflict pains to another person. The works have the following themes *Message In A Battle, I Am 43 Going 12, My Life Is In You, Beyond Silence* and *Not Ready to Walk Away.* The works basically addressed social problems. For example, the work with the theme, *Message In A Battle,* is an installation composed of assorted bottles of different sizes. Moderate spaces are created in

between the bottles. Similarly, another installation titled *I Am 43 Going 12,* created with bamboo tree, rope, empty tins of paint, assorted, candles and earth. The empty tins of paint are used as base for the baboon tree. A rope is tied to join the two bamboo trees at the top. Pictures are then hang across the rope, while copies of similar pictures are dropped on the ground to be covered with the earth, Space is also created between the pictures. Another work *My Life Is In You,* is made up of different geometric shapes. Bigger shape made to encircle the smaller ones. The three works display spaces in different manner that cause pains to others. The other two works, *Beyond Silence* and *Not Ready to Walk Away* are works in different materials covered with paint to show almost violent characters. The artist is concerned because of the bomb blasts that often erase the lives of people.

(viii) **Nsikak Esien**

Nsikak Esien is a realist, and hardly completed his compositions without a human form. The artist depicted his works with narrative details to pass his messages. The themes are conceived to further give direction to the viewer of the intention of the artist. The themes include *Unframed (Halleluiah), Living in Nigeria, Happiest People 2, Love Story Sacrifice* and *Leadership*. For instance, the work titled *Unframed (Halleluiah),* produce in mixed media is symbolic as the action of the figure depicted is clearly seen in deep praying mood. *Living in Nigeria,* is another composition in mixed media. The work depicts horrifying images of victims of war. Human skulls are scattered all over the place with vultures waiting to feed on the carcasses. The theme of the work does not only makes interpretation and evaluation of the work simpler, but it provokes deep thought. *Happiest People 2, i*s another works composed of enamel paint with pieces of wood arrange in conflicting manner. In the midst of what looks like a confusion, human figures in happy mood are depicted. The theme of work focuses on the idea behind the work rather than its appearance. *Love Story Sacrifice*

and *Leadership* are composed in mixed media, display works with narrative details. The arrangements of the elements in the compositions and the themes, have aided the works.

(ix) **Sussan Ogeyi Omagu**

Sussan Ogeyi Omagu is one of the experimentalist artists who adapted different materials for her creativity. Most of her compositions are committed to social injustice. She used simple outlines to represent distorted human forms. Evaluation of works in semi-abstract or total abstraction requires straight forward themes. A good example of this, is the work titled, *Broken Challenges,* created with mixture of paint and papers as well as the composition with the titled *And the Man Died*, created with paint and pieces of fabric materials are both stylized and present cartoon impression. Their theme play major role in directing the thought of the viewer. *Faces* and *Encase* are other creations, composed in mixed media. Simple lines are used to bring out densely populated crowd depicted behind seemingly strong fence and people crowded in a boat. The emphasis of the artist seems to the masses and their plights. The themes of the two works are more revealing, than the appearances of the works. Another work titled, *Fusion,* created by assemblage of different pieces of wood that perfectly fit together in a dramatic style. The work does not point to any particular natural world, but perhaps world of technology. The themes brings out the beauty of the work.

Analysis of the materials the Artists used

The comparative analysis is done to establish similarities or otherwise of the materials the artists understudy, who operate within the six geo-political zones of the country used for their art expression.

(a) Materials used for the art expression

Saxton (1981), Stokstad (1995), Udonbang ang Awa (2013), Reyes (2014), among art historians, have written at different times to highlight the use different materials for art expression. 20th century art expression in Europe, witnessed radical change in the use of material the public was not used to. The Dada artists appropriated almost everything for their art expression. Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp exploited the availability of industrial waste materials and found objects to create works of art. The public was initially sceptical of their art creation, but were later considered and accepted as impressive. Reyes observes that the artists who create these impressive works of art, from unconventional materials certainly, believe that one person's thrash is another person's treasure.

The artists under study have all explored with unconventional materials in their individual art creation. Within the period of study, two major materials were identified to have been appropriated by the artists. These include waste from plants and industrial waste objects. The works composed of absolute waste from plants for art expressions, are obvious in the work of Ndidi Dike' *Waka-Into-Bondage the Taste of ¾ Mile*, heavily decorated materials from the sea-shore. The artists might have exploited her proximity to the ocean to get these materials for the expression. Mabel Chukwu's who lives in Abuja appears to have used the availability of grains that is in abundance, to create the work titled *Continuity.* The work titled *Strength* created from stem of tree commonly found in the middle region for her composition. Ayo Adewunmi does not only explore the environment, but encourages others to do same. One of his works titled *Precious* that was created out of fruits of different plants is a good example of the product of waste from plants. The artist is like one of those ,whom Reyes describes as "…art made from recycled materials certainly believed that one person's trash is another person's treasure". The waste materials from plant show remarkable

differences. While Ndidi Dike's wood composition was highly decorated with ducts from sea animals, Sussan Omagu who lives in Bauchi had created a similar work but mounted used discarded diskette, perhaps as a form of decoration. Jerry Buhari exploited discarded furniture as well as office seat and other similar materials for his compositions. The materials are found elsewhere in Nigeria. Waste materials from plants are all over the country. They offer great aesthetic potentials recognised by the artists who exploited them for their artistic expression.

Some of the artists used purely industrial waste materials to express themselves. For instance, Ayo Aina who lives in Kaduns north-west geo-political zone used toys mostly imported into the country. These are found almost everywhere, in Nigeria. For example, the work titled *Child Trafficking,* where dummies are gathered in their finished stage and composed into an installation art. Ikechukwu Francis on the other hand, scavenged the streets and waste dumbs for discarded electronics and other related elements, with which he captured the impression of cities that display typical African city scape glowing out of the jungles. The works were titled *8 Faces and A village Square, E-City and Garage, Emergent Nitizens,* and *...and Our City Stretch to the Moon*. Didi Dike's *Lagos, Entropy* and *Constitution,* produced to eulogize the city of Lagos, are other works composed of purely industrial waste materials. The Nkechi Nwosu's *Message In A Bottle,* Ayo Adewunmi's *This House Is Not Fallen,* and Ayo Aina's *Green House,* as well, are composed of industrial wastes. These materials like waste from plants are found particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

All the artists produced works that display mixtures of both waste from plants and discarded industrials materials resulting in an unprecedented communion. This is exemplified in Jerry Buhari's *Decay and Regeneration*. Here, the wooden material formed the major parts of the

compositions, while other materials from different backgrounds were surmounted on the wooden surface in an uncongenial manner, perhaps to evoke strangeness capable of drawing attention to its deeper meaning. Another composition where assorted materials are assembled for the creation and which is slightly different from Buhari's work is the installation work titled *Precious* by Ayo Adewumi. Materials from plants, found in thick forestry areas, formed greater aspect of the build-up, while, the odd object is the iron rot, that formed the legs. Unlike Buhari's work which seems to form the map of Nigeria, Ayo Adeunmis's work was the image of a bird in a three-dimensional formation. Paint is used, to add to the aesthetic appeal of the works.

Other works that demonstrate apparent oscillated between the two major materials to incorporate other found materials in their expressions is seen in Ayo Aina's works *Global Warming,* Nkechi Nwosu's *My Life Is In You,* and *Not Ready To Walk Away,* constructed out of industrial waste combined with other waste materials. This shows periodical shift, adapted by the artists in the use of materials. Apart from insignificant differences in the materials found in their environment, other materials are commonly used for art creation, irrespective of their locations.

(b) **Materials and Compositional Techniques**

Analysing the artists' works closely, variations are noted in their styles of handling the various materials they used, to achieve the results. Two or more artists might set out to create works to address the same issue, but may vary in their approaches and techniques. An example is Jerry Buhari's *Man on Earth and Glittering Chains, Charms and Mystery a Foyager,* and Ayo Aina's *Global Warming.* The works indicate how passionate the artists about environmental degradation. Both of them used discarded materials, but differed in their techniques of execution. The two works are fluently persuasive in their characters. As

compositional technique, Jerry Buhari's symbol of the globe hangs above the eye level. The chains seem to be made to dangle directing the eyes to the hip of broken pieces of the globe scattered all over the ground, perhaps as sign of the impending disaster, awaiting mankind. In his approach, Ayo Aina placed the globe, composed of incongruous materials, on a stove painted in pure red colours with firewood gathered under it. The symbolic circular globe with its weight shifted towards the right side of the stove, is perhaps to show its reaction to the heat that exudes from the firewood. These approaches are their individual techniques to effectively communicate their viewers on global warning.

Mabel Chukwu's use of liquidised style, presents an entirely new approach when compared to others who employed the same approach in their compositions. The artist, poured mixtures of brilliant colours and allowed the content flow and assume their forms. The abstract approach adapted by the artist, removed all recognisable forms from her compositions. Therefore, the viewer is guided by the themes to draw up his or her conclusion. In a similar approach but different technique, Sussan Omagu employed splash and spatter techniques or sometimes dabbing as a unique approach. The artist introduced recognisable forms unlike Mabel's method that were non-figurative. Besides, Sussan's paint was not left to over flow their boundaries. Her figures are stylized and almost possess narrative detail. The artists exercised all most the same compositional techniques but addressed different issues. Similarly, Nsikak Essien, use splash method in his liquidised approach. The liquid colours were sparsely applied, quite different from Mabel Chukwu and Sussan Omagu. The artist, like Sussan Omagu, introduced recognisable forms in his composition which form his subject-matter. The artist introduced heavy textures on part of his composition, different from others Mabel and Sussan.

Nkechi Nwosu and Nsikak Essien enriched the surfaces of their canvas with saw-dust and other related materials, before composing their works. Sometimes, the textures are made much more visible that they form part of the compositions. Nsikak Essien's textured surfaces jot out much more than those of Nkechi. He then superimposed his subject-matters to occupy the entire working spaces. Perhaps, this was to achieve his dream, of his paintings reaching a three dimensional status. On the other hand, Nkechi often shifts her subject-matters to a section of the working space to express herself. The spaces created, give the impression of untidy environment, littered with grasses. Although the two artists created textured surfaces, the techniques employed in the introduction of their subject-matters, make the difference in their compositional techniques.

Didi Dike employed fabric materials for her expressions. The artist seems to have taken time to sort out materials of brilliant colurs. She employed suture, stitching and gumming techniques to create intricate folds of different surfaces, a technique that is peculiar to her. Jerry Buhari and Sussan Omagu, like Didi Dike, used diverse stylistic rendition in manipulating fabric materials. Jerry Buhari particularly preferred cut-off pieces from tailors. He employed a more radically inventive approach, where the cut-off pieces and the threads, are skilfully woven into sumptuous compositions. Sussan Omagu on her part seemed to introduce an unfamiliar collage approach where parts of the fabric material were loosed and gummed on the canvas. The threads were further spread all over the surfaces of the canvas where shades of paint were dripped on the surface. This technique employed by Sussan Omagu, developed into what looks like a comb-web-impressions of dense linear quality. The use of fabric materials by the were for employed same materials but different techniques that suit their intentions

Nsikak Essien is known for his detail treatment of human forms as a technique that he thinks suits the materials he use. In his works, he sought to establish ideal proportions for the human body by relating it to three-dimensional quality. Despite the introduction of other materials as way of integrating new concepts, the human figures, played dominate roles. Often, great balance was achieved through the tactical positioning of the human figures which often occupy much of the working space. This approach is quite different from other artists including; Ayo Adewunmi, Ekechwuku Francis, Nkechi Nwosu and Sussan Omagu who introduced human figures in their work. Ekechukwu Francis for instance, used long and short strokes in his finishing. Nsikak and Francis' strokes are short and dense. Francis' strokes particularly, are heavy and appear to block the viewer from seeing the background of the work.

Sussan Omagu's human figures were defined by simple outline with austere colour, quite opposite to Nsikak and Francis' stroke applications. Ayo Adewumi's method of paint application was directly opposite of Nsikak, and Francis' approach. The artist employed classical method of treating the flesh by blending the strokes to achieve photographic quality base on what he wanted to achieve. However, at the end, the works appear to share a similar found items and vibrancy in the use of colours. Indeed, the materials determined the compositional techniques employed by the artists under study. They individually believed, it was the best approach in their individual responses to different situations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Constant shift in characters of art products by artists requires consistent study and proper documentation by art historians. The artists under study have at different times expressed themselves using conventional materials to address issues in society. At different times in their various locations, they willingly opted to explore and experiment with unconventional materials. The driving force for this was the abundance of unconventional materials in the environment. The appropriation of the creative potentials of these materials by some artists often causes controversy among viewers. The discussion of opinions for the use of unconventional materials for art expression informed the analysis of the works of the artists under study.

Odoh at el (2014) observes that the artist who uses waste materials for art expression always explores the environment as a useful source of material with potent and creative possibilities. The artists under study, who have acquired sound formal training in painting, in different institutions, live and operate in different places within the six-geo political zones of the country. They were not keeping track of what the other artists were creating, but each concentrated and expressed their feelings through their works. The same materials of expression might have been appropriated, but the intentions were different. They manipulated the different materials at their disposal, and elevate their aesthetic qualities in different contexts. They have produced works that were exhibited in different places at different times. Not all the works of the artists under study could be located, particularly the installation works, due to their ephemeral nature. Images of such compositions were seen

only in photographic materials, especially in their exhibition catalogues. All the works analysed were individually produced at different locations and times by the artists. This chapter thus gives a summary of the study, outlines its findings, and a conclusion is drawn and recommendations made.

Summary of Major Findings

The research found that the artists studied received formal training in three different art schools at different times. Jerry Buhari, Ayo Aina and Sussan Omagu were trained at different times as painters in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu, Marbel Chukwu, Ayo Adewunmi and Ikechukwu Francis were all trained in the University of Nigeria Nsukka at different periods. They all specialised in painting, but Ayo Adewunmi and Ikechukwu Francis had their first degrees in graphic design and sculpture in Zaria and Port Harcourt respectively, before proceeding for their Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Nsukka. Nsikak Essien was trained at the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, where he specialized in painting.

All the artists individually encountered situations and environments that motivated and spurred them to imitating their mentors, and nature. Personal and individual explorations and experimentations led each of them into discovering the creative potentials of unconventional materials. They expressed deep concerns to communicate uniquely. Progressively, the artists initiated and executed works independently to express themselves, and to communicate with the public. Works in mixed media, do not only present challenges to the artists' skills that, ignite fresh creative concepts, but, the artists derive levels of satisfactions which impact positively on others.

The artists under study live and operate in entirely different locations from one another. It is observed that they all have painting backgrounds; yet they used materials that are unconventional in nature, and persistently express themselves with those materials.

Being aware of the controversies that trail their works, the artists felt that seeking out new problems always challenges one's skill and harnesses one's uncertainty. Besides, the different levels of satisfaction derived from the use of these materials led them to more fulfilled professional practice. The joy of inventiveness made the artists to clearly avoid working in sets of methods under the same conditions. These informed their courage in their chosen materials and techniques of art expression.

The desires of the artists under study are to individually achieve self-satisfaction and effectively communicate with their viewers. Varied material, techniques, and methods were adapted by the artists to achieve this purpose. While some of the artists produced works with narrative detail where evaluation became easier, some works were completely abstract, or present ambiguous surfaces. In dialoguing with such works, the viewer has to draw conclusions based on the impact of the work on him/her. The impact of themes on art creation helps the viewer to understand the intention and direction of the artist. Once the work is understood, the message is communicated.

The focus of this study is the analysis of unconventional materials. Assorted waste materials were scrounged, scavenge, dunged, picked and collected by the artists under study. The materials were analysed to determine their creative potentials and viability before they were manipulated for art expression. Some artists composed the work with a single medium, while others did so with mixed media, depending on what the artist was set to achieve. The materials used determined the compositional technique. Completed composition changes the

life-histories of these discarded material and assigned them new functions in different contexts. Each of the artists' works exhibit quite different aesthetic characters from others.

Conclusion

The research was centred on an analysis of unconventional materials for art expression. To achieve the stated objectives, the study identified the backgrounds of the artists under study, investigated their motivations, and interrogated their courage in the use of the waste materials. Others are the relevance of the themes in their works, as well as the analysis of the materials used. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the research. The researcher went to the field and interacted with the artists in their various studios. In all, forty-five (45) works by the artists were selected, studied and analysed in chapter four. The works were mostly expressed in mixed media. The artists concentrated on themes that dwell on diverse societal issues, including social, political, economic, religious and environmental concerns.

The analyzed works in unconventional materials were illustrated in pictorial images and are presented as plates in the body of the work. The decisions of the individual artists to opt out of the use of conventional materials for the unconventional has provided a useful interface between them, and the materials sourced directly from the environment. Works created in different kinds of waste materials are developed out of the artists' desire to free themselves from the perceived shackles of cultural dictatorship and enslavement. Artists who believe in this concept think it is an artistic effort to democratise art creation to free it from being stagnant. This motivates an intrinsic desire in the artists to joyfully create works free of external dictates, and to interrogate issues of national and international concerns. Therefore, artists who diversify art expression in term of materials and approach are exercising their freedom of expression and increase their creative skills,

As the artists created, they were also consciously or unconsciously into recycling of waste material or old junk, which not only benefits the environment, but also breathes new life into old objects that were once destined for the landfill. Art and its constant shift in ethos cannot be devoid of arguments. Controversy in art is a hidden resource for inciting innovation. Constant explorations and experimentations in different materials bring about multi-cultural experiences which enhance creative thinking as seen in the works of the artists under study.

The discussion on each of the artists' work followed the elements and principles of designs through which the works were created. Some of the works assumed two-dimensional surfaces composed of multiple materials on canvas or panels, while others are three-dimensional forms, especially the installation compositions. Outstanding characteristics, clearly visible in the works, were pointed out and analysed. Conclusions were drawn based on the creative potentials and viability of the materials for art expression, as displayed by each of the works analysed. All the works exhibit unique and compelling satirical characteristic of attraction, yet with powerful messages.

Recommendations

This study has brought forward facts concerning the current works produced by the artists. It has also brought to the fore, areas where steps need to be taken to achieve progress in unconventional art. In view of this, it is recommended that:

Since the research was limited to only nine selected Nigerian artists, there is the need for further research to cover more artists using unconventional materials to also increase the awareness of its presence, its aesthetic possibilities and its worth as alternative materials for art expression.

Manipulating unconventional materials to achieve desired results can be challenging, thus constant exploration and experimentation should be encouraged through sponsorship by institutions of learning, private organisations and individuals. This is with a view to documenting and publishing the process of the experiences for other researchers to improve upon.

The researcher discovered that the artists being studied have transited from one stage of their creative mutation to the other, where diverse styles, techniques, and thematic concerns were employed. Documentation of these stages will be a source of inspiration to practising artists, and a means of acquiring of sufficient information about the artists and their styles by researchers.

The researcher observed that the materials and techniques of this kind of art creation often display surfaces of spontaneous variables that ignite continued creativity. This indeed is a potential clue for invention not only in visual arts, but also in other disciplines. It is therefore recommended that more researches be carried out to examine the influence of these types of art creations on other disciplines with innovative tendencies, to form synergies that will accelerate national development.

The cost of manufactured art materials in the market, coupled with the fall of the national currency against the dollar today, has made the materials much more difficult to access. It is therefore, recommended that the appropriation of discarded materials for art creations at all levels of learning be introduced and made compulsory.

The researcher observed that discarded objects are given opportunity to relive their lives again in new contexts. It is recommended that special places be identified and designated as storehouses where these items can be kept to be reused for other purposes. Orderliness and

sustained maintenance culture will be boosted, while environmental degradation will be reduced.

Contribution to Knowledge

Throughout history, art creation has contributed immensely to knowledge in diverse ways. This research, *An Analysis of Unconventional Materials for Art Expression used by Nine Selected Nigeria Artists*, has found that:

The copiousness of the unconventional materials serves as an alternative media for art expression. These materials are everywhere, including the immediate environments of the artists. Perfection in the use of these materials lies in the constant and sustained exploration and experimentation by the artists.

Art expression in multiple media does not only present ambiguous surfaces that stimulate more creativity or end up their functions in their aesthetic appeals, but also expand the artists' power of imagination and broadens the imagination of the viewer to be more appreciative.

Freedom of expression brings about originality in concepts. Therefore, the artists exercise this freedom to create works that reflect the current issues in newer styles. This further educates the public that stylistic approaches are on the upswing and so, always expect the present to be variances from the previous.

Art creation using unconventional materials requires exploring the environment where waste materials are picked and manipulated into another context. Recycling of waste material or old junk, not only benefits the environment, it breathes new life into old objects that were once destined for the landfill.

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Appendix

Interview with the artists under study

To establish the background information on the artists being studied, the dates for the interviews were arrangement between the researcher and the interviewees. The artists include; Ayo Adewumi, Ayo Aina, Ikechukwu Francis, Jerry Buhari, Mabel Onyekachi Chukwu, Ndidi Dike, Nkechi Nwosu Igbo, Nsikak Essien and Sussan Ogeyi Omagu. The interview took the following order;

1. **Sussan Ogeyi Omagu**

The interview was conducted in her office in Bauchi on the 12th May 2013.
As you progressed in your learning which subject did you like best?

When I was still younger I can remember I used to collect anything colourful into our matrimonial home. I used to feel guilty if I walked pass any without collecting it. My family members were not always happy about this. I didn't know that was art, but as I progressed anything colourful was my favourite. Art become my best subject.

Were you having any role model?
I was self-motivated, but when I was in primary and secondary schools, my teachers were my role models. It was when I gained admission in ABU, my lecturers, particularly Jerry Buhari and Ayo Aina became role models.

Why did you choose to express yourself in unconventional materials?
This came as a result of my personal experience after completing my school tutelage. When I became independent, I was faced with reality of life as there was no one to criticize my work as I was in school. I was now opportune to use anything as far as my inner feeling is satisfied. The materials are expressive and often fascinated of the outcome.

How did you get the materials?
Simple, I picked them around, but, not all things are packable, only those that are appealing.

How do you manipulate these materials to get the desired result?
I can't say exactly what the outcome would be. The entire process is basically experimental in nature. In most cases, the outcome was always fascinating. This is the joy of these materials. I do mix the media and at the end, I applied paint. The works are for my personal satisfaction, although there is the need to do works that may attract customers, but, the over-riding interest is the artists he needs to be contended first. My belief is that on day buyers will come.

How do you fill all these years practicing as a professional artist? It has been very tasking. The challenges are enormous. As an artist, I always try to be different from others. This also tasked me to bring in something new in the art scene. As I practice, I also discover.

Why do you choose Bauchi to practice the type of art you are presently practicing?
I was staying in the Federal capital Territory. I have just been posted here in Bauchi. I believe there is something new I will gain here. When I was in Abuja, I was always

confronted with new challenges. Artists are gradually relocating from Lagos to the city. The art scene was always witnessing new concept. I am working here in Bauchi.

Has the environment where you practice influence your type of art creation?
Definitely, the people here don't so much appreciate art, perhaps because of their religion. But I am grateful they are picking up as you can see some works done by the children's club exhibited on the wall. I also create works both in my office and my resident. We are been careful not to exhibit art works that go against their religion.

What informs the choice of the current materials you use for your expression? I am an experimental artist therefore anything that is appealing to me, I go for it. But as I have stated earlier, the material are expressive. When you effectively combine them, the outcome may be spontaneously amazing. You may discover that my works lend toward collage, yes I think that is the ideal way I can express my concept.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of your works?
Often time, my works are titled after the completion of the work. But titles are based on the current issues of the society. As I have said, I derive joy using the materials as they have been very effective. The themes of my works bring out what I intend to communicate the public.

Have you taught art, if so at what level?
Yes, during my NYSC and very briefly as private school.

What was the attitude of the students towards art? It varied from student to students while some were excited, other simply didn't show interest.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have participated in about thirty group exhibitions so far within the country and three times outside Nigeria. But permit me to state that it is a worthwhile experience to exhibit particular along renowned artists.

What was/is the attitude of your colleagues and the public towards type of painting?
At this stage, it is not what another person will say that will make impact. While some people appreciate the works, other shows no interest.

What aesthetic impact has the current technique on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
I may not be in a position to know this, but as new ground continued to be broken, it has enlarged art appreciation in Nigerian. We cannot deny that fact art is dynamic.

What is the philosophy behind your art creation?
Art to me is a language every generation has, as its style of communication. I believe working with the current materials are ideal way of community my generation.

How will you compare the type of materials and the style you employ to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
In my quest to be unique, the fact that I can be influenced, I don't imitate any person. But if my works look like another person, then it's not intended.

What professional bodies do you belong?
I am a member of Female Artist Association of Nigeria and Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) so far.

What workshop have you taken part in?
I was a resource person for Aftershave International Artist Workshop. Resource person for children club workshop organized every Saturdays.

Have you been commission to execute any work using unconventional materials?
No.

What is your memorable as an artist?
I don't have any specific day, but I am most fulfilled when my works satisfy me.

What will you say is you regret as a painter?
I don't have any.

What will you say is the future of art in Nigeria?
Very bright.

2. Ayo Aina

As you progressed in your learning, what subject did you like best?
I could consider myself lucky as I come from a family that had interest in education. They sent me to school earlier. My uncle was an artist and I think this had influenced on me. But I was not aware of this before. I found myself expressing myself in drawing on suitable surface. Art and technical drawing were subjects I love. I wanted to read architecture, but when this was not possible, I settled down to read fine arts.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?
It was a gradual development. As I have said I was good in technical drawing and fine art as well. When I couldn't read architecture as I wanted, the second option was Fine arts. Amazingly enough, when I was admitted to read arts I discovered that fine art was far much more than what I thought it was.

Where you having any role model?
I was unconsciously influenced by my uncle who is an artist. Gani Odutokun's style of painting influenced me. Indeed Gani was my role model.

From which art school were you trained?
After my secondary school education, I was privileged to be admitted and trained in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Most of your recent works are in unconventional material, how do you get the materials?
You are right; I initially used purely conventional materials or media in my art expression. Experiences acquired through explorations and experimentation, I decided to explore using unconventional material like found objects in my environment. I also felt that since one was out of teacher's tutelage, one is free and independent. Getting the materials was not difficult.

The materials are all around my environment. The bigger issue is their creative potentials. I dialogue with the each item before putting them to make statement. The environment is rich and a rich menu for my creativity.

How do you manipulate the materials to achieve your creative style or desired result?
Here, I will see each materials depending on what the composition is set to address has its method. Sometimes I glued or tied the materials or even weld them as the case may be. In short the materials used determined the method to be adapted.

How did you feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
Every aspect of life has its challenge, but ability to overcome makes one great. I have a sense of fulfillment. I have contributed my quota as an artist in relating to the general public. I thank God; he has helped me serve humanity in this capacity.

Why did you choose Kaduna to practice the type of painting you are doing?
Well, it is not as if I can't do the style elsewhere, but I have a sense of fulfilment here. Despite the fact that this place is far from the art making, I am confortable. Besides, I like the town; I don't create works that reflect only the town, but the work that impact on the life of humanity. I think, Kaduna has made me what I am.
Has the environment where you practice influenced you type of art creation?
There awareness of art perhaps as compare to place like Lagos is different. Here, not all people understand my type of art work. But I think people are getting aware of what one is doing. While it is my desire to carry every one along, my works are not to satisfy any person, but to pass across what I feel.

What inform the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
Sometimes the issue at stake determines the types of materials to be used. Besides, the copiousness of the materials informs my desire to appropriate new items for my expression.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen theme of your work?
Sometimes, the themes come after the work has been completed. Conventional materials have been very expressive. One may set to create a work to achieve or to address an issue; it may end up something else. This has always increased my excitement. So far, unconventional materials are rich menu for my expression.

Have you taught art, if so at what level?
Yes, I have taught art during my national youth service corp. I taught in secondary school.

How was/is the attitudes of the students toward painting media?
Like any other subject, it is hard to cultivate hundred percent loves for the subject. At the same time, art is a calling one must have the gift first. It was exciting seeing young ones growing.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have been painting since 1990 as a professional artist, I have since then been taking part in both group and solo exhibitions within and outside the country. If an artist cannot exhibit, how does he serve the general public and communicate his feeling? I have a duty for humanity; therefore, communicate in varieties of ways and ideas.

What was/is the attitude of your colleague and the public towards your type of painting?
Firstly, I am an individual quite different from any others. It goes naturally, that my art creations are different from others. People or even colleagues may comment negatively towards ones works at the same time, others like them. I know my work over the years have matured. Without considering what someone will say, if you see my works in recent times, I addressed global issues that are of international concern. My concern is to effectively communicate the public.

What aesthetic impact has your current techniques on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
This indeed is left for the researcher to find out, but each time I have an idea or issues to address, I try to be as unique as I can in term of materials and style. For me now to assess my contribution, I can't say. What I know is that I am part of the aesthetic development.

What is the philosophy behind your art creation?
Basically, I believed in the principle of sawing and ripping as it affects aesthetic in the visual world.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles you employ to any artist(s) in Nigeria?
Discarded items found in the environment form parts of my materials. It is also possible, the same materials may be picked by another artist, and certainly, the purpose and style employed might be different. They also are different in their thematic concern. However at this matured professional carrier, one doesn't go so low to copy another person's work.

What professional body (dies) do you belong to?
As a professional studio artist who started practicing since 1990, I am a member of several professional bodies. Among some of these are, Nigerian society of artists (NSA), Nogh-Nogh Art Movement, Art is Everywhere Workshop , just to mention a few.

What workshop have you organized or taken part in?
I have taken part in organizing several workshops. Among some of these were, Nogh-Nogh art workshop, Art is everywhere workshop among others.

Have you ever been commissioned to execute paintings using unconventional materials?
No I have not, but with time it may be possible.

What is your memorable moment as an artist?
I don't particularly have any day, but when my accomplished what I set out to achieve.

What will you say has been your regret as a painter?
I have not witnessed any regret at all. Instead, my dream has been fulfilled.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
To me, the future of art is bright. Artist should know that art is not particularly practiced for survival, but like preaching, it owns a lot to the public.

3. Ayo Adewunmi (The interview was conducted in his studio on the 8th of July 2013 in Enugu.)

As you progressed in your learning, what subject did you like?
I was generally good in all subjects. I became outstanding in visual arts. Honestly, that did not mean anything to me as special.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in Art?
It was during my secondary school days. In think I was naturally been shaped to be an artist. I found myself improving in creating images.

Were you having any role model?
To me it's a natural talent. I hardly spent a day without drawing one thing or the other. This kept growing in me. My father being a photographer also influenced me. I aspired to be like him.

From which art school did you train?
I was admitted in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. I eventually specialized in graphic design. I went to University of Nigeria Nsukka for my Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) where I specialist in painting.

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?
I found out these materials are all over and nothing was being done about them. I decided to experiment with them. I was convinced that was the ideal way of finding solutions to issues. This was further boosted, when I went for a workshop in Burkina-Faso. I was further inspired by what I saw.

How do you get the materials?
As I have stated above, the materials are everywhere except one doesn't care. One needs to explore, else you find it difficult to see aesthetic materials in the environment. It contain much more than we imagine. We must explore more to discover more. To answer your question, the materials are around us, go for them.

How do you manipulate the material(s) to achieve your creative style or desired result?
Depending on what one wants to achieved. The objects as you see, glue is used, welding is applied, and tying is also used. The materials may be mixed. Virtually, we used several methods to archive our desired results.

How do you feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
So far, it has been years of challenges. I have tried to varied may ways of communicating my viewers in most appropriate language to pass my message. I am satisfied with my works and will continue to do more as God gives me the enablement.

Why do you choose Enugu to practice the type of painting you are doing?
It's not as if I choose Enugu as a place to practice when I completed my NYSC, I was employed to work here. I strongly believe it was God's arrangement for me. I continued to assess situation in different dimensions as I keep maturing with the passing moment. Therefore I have never regretted my being in Enugu.

Has the environment where you practice influence your type of art creation?
Yes, so much. The people here are aware of the power of art to express idea. More so, there are artists here that can also spur one to work. Those of us who exploit the environment, we have a lot to discover as far as the visual world is concern.

What informs the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
The life my works I assumed are informed by the choice of the materials which is further informed by what the work is set to be addressed. I use different materials to further express both the aesthetic and wealth potential in these materials. I see wealth in the thrash; one has to work to bring these out.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of works?
I find unconventional materials to be wonderful. Putting them together may determine the theme to be adopted or the artist might have a concept, then works towards its achievement. I am personally fascinated of the outcome. Sometimes I am beholding to my processes of creations and let them lead me to the results, and then the most appropriate themes may be thought of.

Have you taught art, if so, at what level?
At the moment, I teach art where I currently work. I have graduated students at Ordinary to the higher National Diploma (HND) levels.

What is the attitude of the students towards painting media?
At this level, it has been very competitive; students are opened to various ways of self-discoveries. With the introduction of the International Waste to Art Workshops which has its root this school, the attitude of the students towards gaining creative independences and to tap the wealth inherent in the environment, is positive.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
As an experimental artist, this has made me to exhibit within and outside Nigeria. It is out of this experience, that Art is Everywhere Workshops emerged. My exhibitions have been constant both within and outside the country. Sometimes, sponsorship has to come from different organizations within country.

How many times have you taken part/ organized workshops?
I have participated in several workshops both within outside the country. The current workshops going on and which have assumed and international status is part of what I been able contribute. We intend to continue with this works as far as we can go. I have severally participated in the annual Harmattan Workshops.

What was/is the attitude of your colleagues and the public towards your type of painting?
So far so good, artist of like mind have so far come together for the workshop that started here in Enugu, Jos, Abuja, Zaria, Lagos and Port-Harcourt. It has been excitements expressed viewer including artists who come around to see. You cannot rule out the possibility hate among the viewers.

What aesthetic impact has your current technique on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
As an individual, it has been a refreshing and gratifying experience. I have been privilege to work with different committees of students and staff who deeply value what I put forward. Each of us has influence on one another, because of our different ways of solving the same problem. This, I feel is an impact on various techniques and consequently on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria.

What is the philosophy behind your art creations?
I strongly believe that there cash in thrash. It takes creative minds to locate it.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles you employ to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
Even when you set to solve the same problem with the same found item, there bound to be differences in the finished products. The workshops we are embarking on cannot make art works comparable. The finished works are individual signatures.

What professional body (ies) do you belong to?
I am a member of several professional bodies in Nigeria. These can easily traced in some my exhibition catalogues.

Have you ever been commissioned to execute painting using unconventional materials?
Not yet.

What is your memorable moment as an artist?
The most memorable moment as an artist was the workshop in Burkina-Faso. I had another concept of art creation.

What will you say has been your regret as a painter?
I have never regretted being an artist what so ever.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
With what I have experienced in this workshop, there is great hope of art in Nigerian.

4. **Nsikak Essien** (The interview was conducted on the 10th July 2013 in Lagos in his studio.)

Going through your CV, by the age of 22 years you were already in tertiary school, as you progressed in your learning what subject did you like best?
Well I count myself fortunate to have come this far. From a very tender age I was always drawing. This was happening to me unconsciously I became aware of this, when my teacher made remarks on what I might likely to become. I was proud of this and the live for what I was doing, was on the increase.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?
Since I was aware that I would be an artist, art became part of me.

Where you having any role model?
No specific person, but I was always challenged by any work of art and I worked hard to match the standard.

What art school were you trained?
Thank you, after my secondary school, I was admitted and trained at the department of Fine and applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu.

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?
Art is progressive in nature and I was conscious of that. I was always experimenting with different material. If you look at my works, most of the paints are improvised and I did that locally. All these are in attempts to provide ideal solution to problems and which materials are most suitable.

How do you get the materials?
I pick these from my neighborhood.

How do you manipulate the material (s) to achieve your creative style or desired result?
I am a mix media painter. As you can see the works, I often enrich the background before forms are created; colours are then applied where more textures are further created. Sometimes, I create space in-between the work to integrate the negative to the background which form part of the composition.

How do feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
Being a professional studio artist, I have much time to inventive concepts and address issues as they come. In this complex, I occupy three studios, as I move to the other, new ideas emerge which I believed comes divinely from above. My going fully professional I have the opportunity to journey into mixed media land in an attempt to liberate my painting from the prison of two dimensionality.

Why do you choose Lagos to practice the type of painting you are doing?
Lagos is the current leading art market perhaps followed by Port-Harcourt. This has attracted different artist from different parts of the country. What do you expect than healthy competition capable of inspiring other artist too? .If you want to make an impact, work with people where they either accept or reject you.

Has the environment where you practice, influence your type of art creation?
As I have said, Lagos has large concentration of artist. This therefore put ones creative ability to task. The energy now in the art sector is energized. We are now riding on the crest of its mammoth wave. Nigeria has become an art destination and who doesn't want to be in such an environment. My arts have since been transformed. The environment in the town is conducive for artistic activities.

What informs the choice of the materials you use for your expression?
To those who know me before particular those at IMT, when they see my work now, they would be shocked. I started in freewheeling colour carnival made irreverent in style and prodigal in application. The present materials crept up on me from about 1983/85. I now know it was really the cry of my spirit seeking to come to the fore. This has informed the

choice of any materials. Sometimes, the speed the message will come, and may require immediate execution and natural materials or you lost the message.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of your works?
It has been very effective. I am born again; I create works to reach out to the lost. The materials I currently use have brought to the fore the hidden treasuries, that is the mission that my art is going to dwell. The materials I used have become a unique voice in among other artworks calling for repentance.

Have you taught art, if so at what level?
In my response to the first question, my Alma Mata engaged me. I taught from Ordinary Diploma to Higher National Diploma.

What was/is the attitude of the students towards painting media?
Perhaps my attitude towards the subject and the media influenced the students for the period I stayed in the institute. Students were always trying to out-do one another in term of technique and style, using several media at their disposal. My assignment of them is that they were ready to discover and explore with diverse media.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
Since 1979 to date, I have been exhibiting but the approach ere as an ordinary artist. Now I am living a different experience on my canvas. When you go through my catalogues, you will certainly discover how many times and where these exhibitions were held. Take note, my groups and solo exhibition emitted from the spirit realm. My recent exhibitions convey revving's images.

What was/is the attitudes of your colleagues and the public towards your type of painting?
With my current renewed focus, my canvas carries both aesthetic and salvation messages I cannot say to what extent, the works have impacted on the lives of the viewers. My forms in mixed media are always in narrative forms. I have received positive comments, but contrary views cannot be ruled out.

What aesthetic impact has your current technique on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
Unfortunately, I am not an artist who produces to meet increasing market demand. I don't struggle to be on the checklist of collectors. You cannot imagine me to perform to their drumbeat and leaving the applause behind. I produced works in most cases when I hear the small voice. I hurry up to do it. Whether the work has made Impact, I may find this personal judgment a little difficult to make to avoid bias.

What is the philosophy behind your art creating?
My desire is for my paintings to one day assume a three-dimensional status.

What professional body (ies) do you belong to?
I am a full time studio artists, it goes without saying that I belong to professional bodies. I don't shun away from any professional body that build the artist. The mother of these is Society of Nigeria Nrtists. Again, find this out from my exhibition catalogues.

What workshop have you organized or taken part in?
I have participated in both organizing and participating in many workshops and seminar, few among many of these including, aftershave international Art Workshop/Exhibition curator, First Africa Regional Exhibition (ARESUVA) and Summit of Visual Art. To be accurate, find this out from my catalogues.

What is your memorable moment as an artist?
My journey in the art world is full of excitement. It is difficult to isolate one. It has been an issue of up and down.

What will you say has been your regret as a painter?
Perhaps it would have been when my art forms were not committed to touching the lives of other, for Christ. I regret that I was serving the devil with my art creation.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
Nigeria is the destination of art in African.

5. **Nkechi Nwosu Igbo**
   The interview was held on the 10th of June 2013 at her residence in Lagos.

I glance at your C.V. When you were at the age of 19 you were already in the university, as you progressed in your learning, what subject(s) did you like best?
Thank you, I am from an enlightened home. My elder brother particularly, dictated the creative potential in me he encouraged me. Art creation was my best subject.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?
I strongly believe art is inborn in me. Throughout my learning so far, art has continued to be part of me.

Were you having any role model?
It was not having any specific role model, but inspired by my lecturers and colleagues.

At which art school were you trained?
On completing my secondary education, I was admitted to read Fine and Applied Arts at famous University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN).

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?
It appears to me that I have an unquenchable thirst for creativity. I experiment with wide range of materials. As we talk now, I am into interior decoration on blending it with my painting experience. The choice of the materials is my continuous search for reality.

How do you get the materials?
The environment is sufficiently rich. I don't go far to obtain the materials. I first assess that creative potentials before the composing them.

How do you manipulate the material(s) to achieve your creative style or desired?
Diverse media are used depending on what I want to achieve. In my painting, the background of my canvas is texturized before forms are depicted. I am into installation. The

types of materials used will define the shape and size of the composition. Therefore, to achieve my creative styles is pronounced by the type of media.

How do you feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
It has been years of increase. Art has constantly been redefined due to the experimentation that has been involving in. My husband being an artist too, may look after the children while I work in the studio. My works focus particularly on women and children who suffer pains as a result of creating/erasing space.

Why do you choose Lagos to practice the type of painting you are doing?
Lagos is large enough to accommodate different kinds of profession. If you look at the history of modern art, the artists were often gathered at commercial cities. After the Second World War, artist moved to New-York. Lagos is the commercial city of Nigeria. As a studio artist, it is only wise to be closed to the market hence my choice of Lagos.

Has the environment where you practice influence you type of art creation?
I must confess, my art creation has changed so much as a result of my personal discoveries and interaction with colleagues. My perception of art kept changing. To me, art is been redefined each time.

What inform the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
Normally, the subject-matter determines the choice of materials. My creativity is driven by the love for the unconventional materials and the desire to discover new ways of transforming and representing discard items to make statement. I always have satisfaction each time I use the materials.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of your works?
Unconventional materials open up opportunities to discover other ways of coming with up other creative possibilities. Composing works in mixed media present ambiguous result. This can also be altered to key into ones chosen themes. I can say the material is effective in the chosen themes.

Have you taught art, if so at what level?
Yes I taught art, but so brief that I would have not assumed their attitude concerning the materials. The materials that we used, the students were excited.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have taken part in a total of sixteen (16) exhibitions, two were solo exhibitions held in 2001 and 2003. The other fourteen (14) were group exhibition as at 2003.

What was the attitude of your colleagues concerning the type of your art creation?
It is natural that people differ in their preference of things. People, even your colleagues may not appreciate your concept. The viewer's attitude cannot deter the artist's creative ability. Yes, in a situation where two or more gathered, they can all be the same. While some expressed excitement, others simply dismissed the works with a wave of hand.

What aesthetic impact has your current techniques on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
Art world is never static. It is always on the upswing. I try to make my type of art creation as different as I can. This opens up another way of seeing or addressing issue. No matter how little, I think, it has created an aesthetic impact in the contemporary art practice of Nigeria.
What is the philosophy behind your art creation?
It is simply creation and erasing space.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles you employ to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
Certainly, when I analyzed deeply, you will discover that almost all artists who appropriate mixed media, have similar materials, but perhaps differ in their styles and themes. They are many of such artists here in Lagos.

What professional body (s) do you belong to?
To more accurate, the information is better traced in my exhibition catalogues.

What workshops have organized of taken part in?
I have taken part in workshop related activities like presenting art programmes in television from 2002-2003 especially NTA channel 5, Lagos, channel television and many other. I have curated several art exhibitions in Lagos, written several poems and have reviewed several books.

Have you ever been commissioned to execute painting using unconventional materials?
Not at all.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
The future of art in Nigeria is so bright.

6. Marbel Chukwu

The interview was held at her resident on the 8th February 2014 in the federal capital territory, Abuja.

As you progressed in your learning, what subject(s) did you like best?
Well, thank you, my parents especially my elder brother saw an artistic talent in me. This was nurtured by making available what they thought I needed for the development of my talent. Art was a subject I love most. Today, here I am as a professional artist.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?
I had just said everything I needed to develop the talent in me was made available. It was a continues encouragement to me all through my learning. You can now see the foundation was solid. Development was built upon this foundation throughout the other stages of my learning.

Where having any role model?
Any captivating work of art inspired me. Therefore, the inspiration I got from other artist's creations, along with my personal experience shaped me.

At which art school were you trained?
After my secondary school education, I was admitted at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I graduated and major in painting under the tutelage of Professor Chike Aniakor.

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?
This to me is the product of experimentation common with artist. The artist wants to be unique in his expression and so experiment with diverse media including the unconventional materials. My use of unconventional materials or mixed media is my quest to explore and interrogate the visuals world in new materials, but this largely depends on what I want to solve.

How do you get the materials?
I don't need to go far, they are all around me.

How do you manipulate the material(s) to achieve your creative style or desired result?
My current works as you can see some around, I employ liquidized technique, where I combine the mixture of paint, egg-york and egg shells. The mixtures are poured on the surface and sometimes allowed to assume its own form. Sometimes the mixtures are guided to achieve the needed result. Besides the liquidized method, I use other materials that require gumming.

How do you feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
I feel great, my art expressions have moved to the next level. New materials and methods are constantly being discovered. One contributes to the development and moving the nation forward. I think my current works which address injustice against women; the works is one of the advocates for the womanhood.

Why do you choose Abuja to practice the type of art you are creating?
My being in Abuja is because my employer is in Abuja. At the same time, Abuja as a Federal Capital Territory is gradually becoming an art market. It is currently attracting an in flock of young artist. I don't regret my being here. As I have said my art concept and style have not remain the same.

Has the environment where you practice influence your type of art creation?
Yes, the environment has influence in what one does. The attitudes of the people among whom you live may determine the art forms and styles. This is to enable the artist effectively communicate them effectively. Here, is a mixture of people of mixed backgrounds. One tries to be struck to the middle course.

What inform the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
I have already become introspective in the use of purely conventional media and emergent of pictorial thoughts and imageries. Today, my works have matured from years of creative incubation and discreet. I have the audacity to incorporate strange materials and style in my search for reality.

How effective are the on conventional materials on the chosen themes of your works?
The technique of liquidized art creation I adopt allows the artist to wait for it's out-come to be established first. Alteration could be made to suite the conceived concept or they allow

the accidental out-come to determine the theme. The materials I use have not only been effective, but make my creativity flexible.

Have you taught art, if so what level?
I presently teach painting and drawing at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Federal College of Education, Zuba, Abuja.

What was/is the attitudes of the students the painting media?
To be sincere with you, some of the students don't know what to do. Sometimes one wanders if such students really love art and to be specialists in any of its the several areas. But some are really good.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have participated in both solo and group exhibition within and outside this country. I check my exhibition catalogues please.

What was/is the attitude of your colleagues and the public towards your type of paintings?
People attitudes differ considerably. Some will openly commend you and appreciate the works. Some on the other hand will have their reservation while others may not appreciate anything about the works.

What is the philosophy behind your art creation?
The philosophy behind my art creation is the fragility of the womanhood and the need to treat her with care.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles employed to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
Artist employ almost the same materials especially those who employ found items, but the variation lays in the styles used in the manipulation and the motive behind the works and what it is set to achieve which is the ultimate.

What professional body (ies) do you belong to?
I belong to society of Nigerian Artist (SNA), Nigerian Women in Visual Art (NWVA), NSEA, PACA. Again, check my catalogues.

What workshop have you organized or taken part in?
I have participated in Pan African Circle of Artist Work Shop, Society of Nigeria Artist's Workshops and again, you discovered more of this in the catalogues as I earlier said.

What is you memorable moment as an artist?
I don't have any particular one.

What will you say has been your regret as a painter?
I cannot remember any.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
The future of art in Nigeria is promising.

7. Ikechukwu Francis

The interview was held on the 20th March 2014 in Port-Harcourt.

What subject did you like best, as you progressed in your learning?

Like any other child, any representation is an achievement, I was creative and this was natural in me. Of course art became my best subject.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?

My love for art was when I was still young, but the interest kept increasing. When I was in the University of Port-Harcourt it was then, my interest was boosted.

Were you having any role model?

I was always moved by any good work of art, but when I was at University of Nigeria Nsukka, El.Anatsui and Professor Chike Aniakor were my role models. I was moved by the conceptual expression of El Anatsui and the thematic depth of Chike Aniakor.

At which Art school were you trained?

I first went to University of Port-Harcourt were I specialized in sculpture. I was not contended, I went to University Nigeria Nsukka for my masters in painting. I was therefore, trained in the two Art schools.

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?

When I was in the University of Nigeria Nsukka, I admired the conceptual expression of El-Anatsui, apart from that he used to encourage to go out and pick items thrown about for my expression. Don't forget that this style is inherent in the process of sculpturing. I used both painting and sculpture techniques to come out with the style of my art creations.

How do you get the materials?

I Search for the objects where they are dumped or thrown about particular mechanic workshops, computer/radio repairer's workshops and the streets.

How do you manipulate the material(s) to achieve your styles of desired result?

Basically I use electronic boxes. I sometimes weld parts of the content I want. Paint is applied to reverberate and to change the contexts. Where canvas was used the qualities of the texture was increased. All these were aimed at achieving my desired result.

How do you feel all these years practicing as professional artist?

I think my artistic expression have widen. My experience is on the increase I have learnt from others and I believe others have also learnt from me. I have travelled far and wide for art related issue.

Why do you choose Port-Harcourt to practice the type of painting you are doing?

Well, I work here in Port-Harcourt, but I don't know if I would have been here or elsewhere, if I were not an employee of University of Port-Harcourt. I also want you to know that in term of attraction as far as art market is concern, Port-Harcourt is next to Lagos. I think God almighty has a hand in this arrangement.

How has Port-Harcourt where you practice influenced your type of painting you are doing?

It is not as if discarded electronic circuits cannot be found elsewhere, but I think the hips of the discarded electronics drew my attention. The people here appreciate art. You may be discouraged if people don't understand what you are doing or your language.

What informs the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
I have been an experimental artist. I consciously use materials that I feel are ideal to communicate the public. I therefore believe the current materials are appropriate are suitable for my kind of art creation.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of your works?
You know the circuitry boxes have readymade content. I add what I want to and then apply paint. The materials I use have been absolutely effective. Each time I finished a piece of work, I have a sense of fulfillment.

Have you taught art before, if so at what level?
Yes, I am currently teaching mix media painting and drawing at the University of Port-Harcourt. I am pleased to see others growing.

What was/is the attitudes of the students towards painting media?
I start with my students from known to the unknown. I expose them to wide range of materials. I think my students are inspired by this challenge. The students see aesthetic potential in almost everything. I think this is also good for art development in Nigeria.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have taken part in several exhibitions in both Nigeria and outside the country. For instance I participated in the 2001 Biennale de 'l Art Africain Contemporain, INTERVENTION WORKSHOP at Greatmore. In 20012, I participated at the Artist Workshop at Triangle Art Centre New York. I have participated in many national exhibitions.

What was/is the attitude of your colleagues and the public towards your type of painting?
Initially, people seem not to understand my style of art creation, but the public include my colleagues appreciate my kind of art creation which are basically ideation from architectonic of design on radio/computer boards.

What aesthetic impact has your current technique on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
I believe concomitant changes in paradigm and shifting ethos is inherent in art production. Every work produced evokes new ideation which to me is an increase. They must not assume a large scale before it is acknowledged, but no matter how small an aesthetic impact is accomplished. But I can say categorically to what extent.

What is the philosophy behind your work?
The use of circuit boards as metaphor of cities and its people with the alternative status of NETIZENS.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles you employ to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
The basis for comparing materials for art creation is just not there since every artist expresses him the way he feels is the best he can communicate his idea. I don't think, artists are after the materials, but the end results. The materials may be the same, but of course, the styles may differ considerably.

What professional body(ies) do you belong?
I am a member of almost all the popular professional Professional bodies, but I advise that you check my exhibition catalogues for more information. Pan African Circle of Artist.

What workshop have you organized or taken part in?
I have taken part in organized Art is everywhere workshop going on in Nigeria, participated at the artist workshop at Triangle Art Centre New York, participated in Biennale de I' Art Africain contemporain and INTERVENTION WORKSHOP at Great more and much more.

Have you ever been commission to executed paintings using unconventional materials?
No I have not

What is your memorable moment as an artist?
No single moment, but all moments.
What will you say has been your regret as a painter?
To be frank with you, I don't have any.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
It is exciting that more and more budding artists are developing interest in the subject. The future is great.

8. Jerry Buhari
The interview was held on 5th July 2015 in Zaria.

As you progressed in your learning what subject(s) did you like best?
I didn't have any specific preferred subject. My interest is divers and varied from encounters of ideas, emotions, place or materials. At the moment, I am interested in environmental issues, issues of waste generation and management. When my interest is focused in this area, I would like to use waste materials specifically, for now fabric from tailor who makes dresses for women. I am also interested in the rise of security check-points.

At what level of your learning did you develop interest in art?
As far back as my childhood days in my village Akwaya when I would watch my elder brothers draw in sand and on scrap paper. By the way back then as not a common object in my village.

Were you having any role model?
At that level of my childhood, my elder brother, Mairiga and Jim were my role models.

At which Art school were you trained?
I can say that my training in art started from my art classes at both primary schools. I decided to study art when I came to Zaria.

What painting media have you experimented with?
I have used oil, acrylic, water colour, polymer, enamel and gouache.

Why do you choose to express yourself using unconventional materials?
Unconventional materials give me a feeling of liberation freedom from the conventions of traditional materials. They appear more expressive with strong visual power and clarity.
How do you get the materials?
I collect them as I move around. I always keep my eyes and artistic sensibility open and alert. So the materials are built slowly overtime. I am never in a hurry to collect them. It is in the process of collecting these materials that I dialogue between the materials and i commence. This ultimately would lead to the new work that I often create.

How do you manipulate the materials to achieve the creative styles or desired result?
I do not have a specific way, each materials, subject demand a different approach. For example in my spillage series, I simply pour the colours on canvas and allow them to run out to the floor. When I address melting planet series, I pour the colours on the support laid flat on the floor. Then I carefully begin to draw symbols, motifs and images on the wet colours.

How do you feel all these years practicing as a professional artist?
At the moment I feel that there are many art works that I failed to give birth to. And time is running out. But now and then I stumble on other artist's works and realize that they have done or are doing what I have failed or unable to do. But I also feel satisfied that the few works I have done, have received some form of recognition. This is so when I get emails inviting me to participate in some important shows or when I am request to summit works for a project. But perhaps of more satisfaction is when my students and my colleagues think well of my works.

Why do you place you stay to practice the type of painting you are doing?
I don't think I deliberately made this choice. It was mainly circumstance dictating my movement. This is rather regrettable. I wish I had greater control in this area.

Has the environment where you practice influence your types of art creations?
I will say yes, for one, I have a salary, so I am not under pressure to produce "marketable" art. This is privilege luxury. Secondly, being in the University and teaching art. I find that my approach to art making is conscious, deliberate purposeful. This perhaps explains why my works are in serial format. This means that I take an idea or material and investigate its nature, form and expressive potentials. I stretch myself to the limit I can reach before moving into another series, depending on my ability to sustain the interest. Sometimes it is another idea that takes me away. I must however quickly add that it is not as if my approach to art making is systematic, logical or what have. No, essentially when I make art all my creative energies are brought to the fore. I rely on intuition, spontaneity and sometime deliberate rejection of established artistic conventions. I swing between these moods. It is this swing that gives birth to my satisfying works.

What informs the choice of the current materials you use for your expression?
My interest in the way humans use the environment destructively and the current insecurity in our land.

How effective are the unconventional materials on the chosen themes of your work?
As I said earlier, I found them more eloquent and visually impactful. Also, because they are unconventional, I get this feeling that they are free from preconceived expectation my works so called art collectors and patriots. I want my work to first speak to an audience for interaction. These are my first or partners. The buyers come last.

Have you taught art, and at what level?
Again, I think my C.V. will give you all these. But I joined the department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University as an assistant in July 1982 and have been teaching different courses since then, from diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

What as/is the attitude of the students towards painting media?
Frankly speaking, most of the students exhibit a struggle and inability to understand the character of colours. And I think that painting or the use of colour cannot be taught. We can only introduce the materials and encourage the students to try it out. I see a general poor attitude to a conscious desire to understand the colour by the painting students.

How many times have you exhibited both in Nigeria and outside the country?
I have participated in more than eighty exhibitions, both solo and group.

What was/is the attitude of your colleagues and the public towards your type of painting?
Generally speaking, commendable, sometimes, they show open wonder and desire to learn how I paint. But I also think that some have reservations on my works. Particularly, the ones where unconventional materials were used and some abstract works painted after the traditional style.

What aesthetic impact has your current technique on the contemporary art practice in Nigeria?
I will hesitate to say, because may immodest. Perhaps, scholars like you are better placed to advance this assessment.

What is the philosophy behind your art creation?
Again, my philosophical ideas can be found in my writings, interviews and artist's statements. It may be better and richer for you to find them in the different publications where I am featured.

How will you compare the types of materials and styles employed to any contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria?
I am not sure I understand this question very well. Artists employ almost the same types of materials. Variation may be in their manipulation and the different result achieved. So artist use diverse paint media, waste materials, found objects and so on. Each would differ in stylistic expression. An artist would then focus on specific idea techniques or seek a kind of visual effect. So in the end, perhaps the focus is not the materials but the process and the end result. Yet for some, it is the end result that is their major concern. But again, scholars like you may be in a better condition to undertake this type of analysis or description.

What professional body (ies) do you belong to?
SNA, NSEA, Bridgethearts, PACA, ACASCA, Aftershave international Artist Workshop, ASUU.

What workshops have you organised or taken part in?
Workshops organised: Aftershave International Artists Workshop, One Minute Video Art Workshop and Aesthetic of Reduced Forms- A Painting Workshop. Workshop participated: Aftershave International Artists Workshop, One minute Video Art Workshop, Aesthetic Reduced Forms Art in Action Workshop, Harmattan Workshop, Chiaroscure: An experimental drawing workshop, Vasl international Artist Workshop, Vibration: a metal sculpture Workshop, AFAS Drawing Workshop e.t.c.

Have you ever been commissioned to execute paintings using unconventional materials?
No.

What is your memorable moment as an artist?
When I finish a work and consider it unique or successful.

What will you say has been your regret as painter?
Not being able to paint all the ideas that come to me.

What do you think is the future of art in Nigeria?
The future is very great!! Nigerian artistic practice has led to the establishment of auction houses with very excellent results and profit to both the artist and the art market. Nigerian artists are increasingly being recognised on the internal art arena. Their works are recognized as part of global discourse on issues of human concern.