NIGERIAN CURATORSHIP AND THE EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART WORKS

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DECLARATION

I, Saunders, Nichola, hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and is a record of my own research. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated by quotation marks or indentation and sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

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SAUNDERS, Nichola DATE

CERTIFICATION

The thesis entitled: "Nigerian Curatorship and the Exhibition of Contemporary African Art Works" by Saunders, Nichola, meets the regulations governing the award of the higher degree of Masters of Arts (M.A. Art History) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. The research is therefore approved for its contribution to knowledge.

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DEDICATION

To my family, who have exhibited great understanding in their support of my often unconventional aspirations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

I am grateful to all staff members, of the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who welcomed me into the department as a post-graduate student of art history in 2001. I owe special thanks to the then Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Design, and former Head of the Department of Fine Arts, Jerry Buhari, who encouraged me to not only join the department but to take part in a variety of local art events, including the 2003 Aftershave International Artists Workshop. As a foreign student studying in Nigeria, l found such efforts to be heartening when enthusiasm was at times lacking. Much gratitude for the guidance of the two supervisors of this study is also due, these are Dr Babalola (major supervisor) and Dr Saliu (minor supervisor). I am also especially thankful for the informal feedback provided by both Jacob Jari and Tonie Okpe, and the many articles they introduced to me during the period of my study, these have surely been priceless contributions.

I first visited Nigeria in 1995, as an undergraduate student of the Department of African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Although the primary purpose of the study trip was to learn Hausa, it further offered me an insight into the dynamic visual arts scene within Nigeria. After this initial introduction to the country, subsequent visits were made for both study and work purposes, and these were greatly supported by one of my former lecturers of Hausa language at SOAS, Malami Buba. l also thank all those who participated in this study, whether located within or without of Nigeria, in spite of often busy schedules. Final thanks goes to the various friends, as well as my family and colleagues who have shown support throughout the period of this study.

Nichola Saunders, Zaria 2004

ABSTRACT

NIGERIAN CURATORSHIP AND THE EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART WORKS

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The work of this thesis contributes to debates about cultural representation as it relates to the exhibition of contemporary African art works. The central themes of enquiry are the qualification and quality of Nigerian curatorship, and what contributions Nigerian curators are making in the redefinition of contemporary African art works, in light of the current debate into the misrepresentation of African art works by Western curators. The focus of investigation is the extent to which provision for curatorial scholarship is considered within course curriculums at institutes of higher education within Nigeria, and the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary Nigerian curatorial practice. The central questions taken for analysis are: Why are so few curators of Nigerian decent internationally recognised? Whose values and tastes unfluence the Nigerian curators selection criteria? What is the value of indigenous curators in the organisation of international exhibitions of contemporary African art works? What can be done to encourage a new direction in the reception of contemporary African art works? The hypothesis of the study is that "an indigenous curator is best informed to curate exhibitions of contemporary art derived from his or her own culture, and therefore should dominate in the organisation of such exhibitions". This hypothesis is examined with reference to the educational and curatorial practice of Nigerian art lecturers working within Nigeria, and Nigerian curators working both within and without of Nigeria.

The overall analysis is divided into three principal areas of investigation: "Education and Curation in Nigeria", which addresses the question of what actually

qualifies someone as a curator of contemporary African art works in Nigeria. The section refers to the personal views of Nigerian curators, the development of tertiary course curriculums [and their content] in the visual arts and art history since their inception, and concludes with a discussion of the relevance of current course content to the area of curation and exhibition; "Experience and Curation in Nigeria", then looks at the experience of Nigerian curators, and the demands of the national exhibition, with specific reference to the areas of location, identity, and aesthetic values. Changes in exhibitionary practice is also addressed with particular attention paid to the funding of projects, and the effect of both local and international patronage on the art exhibition in Nigeria; the third area, "Nigerian Curators in the West", examines the curatorial practice of expatriate Nigerian curators, again with reference to the areas of location, identity, and aesthetic values. The views of both national and international curators are then given in reference to the role of African curators in the diaspora and the exhibition of contemporary African art.

Findings indicated that although there exists a considerable exhibition culture in Nigeria today, that professionality in the field is lacking. Although those interviewed for the study were considerably active in the field, and exhibited a knowledge of contemporary Nigerian art, the education and experience of these artist-curators was inhibited by the limitations of current post graduate education in curation or related fields of study, such as cultural representation, and also inadequate facilities and funding for the actualisation of professional exhibitions. Finally, recommendations centred on the provision of post-graduate courses in curation and related fields of study, most appropriately as a masters degree programme, and further emphasised the obligation of the Federal Government of Nigeria to encourage a greater professionality in exhibition through the provision of repositories of art suitable for both national and international exhibitions.

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a synopsis of recent discourse concerning cultural representation, from the late nineteen seventies to present. The information provided clarifies the position, and genesis of the study, "Nigerian Curatorship and the Exhibition of Contemporary African Art Works", with specific argument regarding cultural representation as it relates to the display of non-Western art works.

1.1 Background

It is generally recognised that Western scholarship (including art history) has developed out of a history of conquest and expansion (political and commercial)[1], beginning with the first colonial initiatives of the eighteenth century[2]. This has left the West in a dominant, central position, as opposed to the peoples [and their cultures] of the South who are seen as peripheral. Although all societies create ideas of the "other" to validate their own social boundaries and individual identities, the West is accused of using concepts of a distant "other"[3] in an effort to maintain its authority. By designating the other as "underdeveloped", "primitive", "different", "exotic" and "static"[4], the West has effectively denied any active or critical participation in prevailing cultural practices. Today racial stereotypes continue to nurture unequal power relations between the West and the "other" principally by means of receptacles of modern learning, such as academic institutions and the popular media.

In relation to the reception of non-Western art works, the feelings of superiority that emerged with colonialism are said to have privileged European collectors and curators the authority to judge and define art works by their own criteria of value. The conditions of visibility - what is seen, and how and when the other is seen - are largely in their control. The tastes influencing such decisions have in turn been subject

to the racial and cultural stereotypes developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when artifacts were first brought as bounty to the ethnographic halls of Western museums[5].

These artifacts were initially incorporated into Western art culture by means of an anthropological presentation, and grouped art works would be contextualised with labelling and visual aids to stress their function and ["tribal"] origin. Information pertaining to an individual artist, such as name and date of production, was usually omitted. Clearly, the emphasis was on the "authentic" artifact and how it relayed the timeless traditions of a particular "tribe" rather than an individual work of art to be appreciated as such. As anthropologist James Clifford (1997) concludes from literature concerned with the early history of the exhibition of non-Western art: "It reveals the racism, or at best the paternalist condescension, of spectacles which offered up mute, exoticised specimens for curious and titillated crowds"[6].

When the art of non-Western cultures was finally recognised as art rather than artifact, at the beginning of the twentieth century[7], it was still on Western terms. Private gallery owners and art museum directors began to look to the formalist aesthetics prescribed by the Western canons of "modernism"[8] when judging, defining and displaying art works. Selected art works were presented in isolation within the white space of the modern art gallery in order that they would be appreciated as individual pieces. However, again art works often remained authorless. For example, the exhibition "Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern", curated by William Rubin (1984), art works were left to speak for themselves with contextualisation limited to ethnic labels alone.

These dominant positions to the exhibition of African art were most often applied to the display of mainly "tribal" sculpture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not until the 1980's that the exhibition of modern African art was

given greater attention, dispite its considerable development within Africa since the 1960's. Unfortunately, the majority of Western curators, have continued to show a preference for art works that comply to the racial stereotype of an "authentic" African art. That is, an art that would give the impression of an eternal, traditional culture very different and distant to that of the progressive, advanced West. This authenticity has largely been translated as the works of naive or self-taught artists in a perpetuation of neo-primitivist exoticism[9]. As Emma Barker (1999) confirms, "Museums and galleries are not neutral containers offering a transparent, unmediated experience of art"[10].

Today, although in the guise of cultural recognition, "post-modernist"[11] approaches to the exhibition of art from non-Western cultures continues to perpetuate the stereotypes pertaining to the "other" in an active promotion of "difference". Whilst art critic Thomas McEvilley (1992) complains that Modernism fetishisizes sameness, he also warns of a fetishization of difference in post-modern approaches to the exhibition of art from non-Western cultures. Art works of non-Western cultures appear to be little more than commodity, which if compatible with such stereotypes, are highly marketable. As curator Richard Hilton (1999) says of the recent exhibitions "Zero Zero Zero" and "Cities on the Move": "Celebrating the other, be it global or local, is tantamount to aestheticising difference for market expedience and, as such, it has little to do with real empowerment"[12].

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since the mid 1980's there has been a noticeable increase in the popularity of temporary exhibitions of contemporary non-Western visual arts (including that of African origins) in the West[13]. Today, contemporary African art can be viewed at a number of international venues, including: museums, galleries, art workshops and a number of public spaces. The majority of these often high-profile exhibitions[14] have continued to be shaped by a select group of Western curators, some of whom do not even have qualifications in the field of art history, much less any specialisation in

African art. Curators currently influencing international art markets are largely made up of anthropologists, and art collectors from the West. This is confirmed by art historian Sidney Kasfir-Littlefield (1999): ". . . the tastes and preferences of a handful of private collectors and the curators who work closely with them have had a great influence on the way in which contemporary African art is being defined for its various publics"[15].

Often with little specialist knowledge of African artistic practice, and African aesthetics, these curators are prone to rely on personal preferences when approaching an exhibition, and these are in turn influenced by the social values of their own cultures. Such personal decisions, based on Western tastes, values, and assumptions, can give a misleading representation of contemporary African art that often perpetuates racial stereotypes of the "other". This is manifest in the constant stream of survey type shows that confine the African artist to exhibitions of the "ethnic" category, as representative of a homogeneous Africa. Selection processes for these exhibitions further show an obsession for the art of the naive [non-academic] artist, at the expense of artists who have passed through higher institutions of learning. The art of the naive artist seems to demonstrate the sought after distance between the art of Western scholarship and that of the African artist. This bias does not only give a misleading portrayal of African art to the international viewer, but can also put pressure on artists to invent identities that comply with the aesthetic values of the dominant Western art market. As artist and critic Olu Oguibe (1993) contests: " . . African artists are either constructed or called upon to construct themselves"[16]. Critics, including Picton (1993), Appiah (1997), and McEvilley (1992), [although they do not dismiss the Western curator completely from partaking in the exhibition of non-Western art], condemn those curators from the West who have used their own cultural tastes as a standard to judge others [often with inhonourable motives], and ask for a greater criticality of ones own tastes as well as an appreciation of those of others.

Until African artists are brought into the mainstream, as artists rather than African artists, then these exhibitions of the "ethnic" category will persist. Many critics [especially those of African decent] call for the increased participation of indigenous curators in the exhibition of the art of their own cultures. The presumption is that self-definition will open up the diversities of African art to the public, challenging and expelling racial stereotypes, and subsequently recognising the individuality of artists and allowing them to enter the mainstream. However, the current trend in exhibitions of contemporary African art works seems to support the participation of African artists and art historians only as co-curators or advisors, subordinates of their Western counterparts. This seems to imply that Western curators are aware of their deficiency in knowledge concerning African artistic practice. Despite this, few African curators are seen to be challenging this inadequacy and making any significant impact on the international exhibition circuit in their own right.

Patronage within and without of Africa has increased and diversified over the last decade[17], and therefore the assumption would be that indigenous curators have emerged alongside these developments, with the capabilities, qualifications and experience to supersede Western curators and begin to redefine African art on the international circuit. The reasons for the lack of African curators working internationally remains unclear, whilst Oguibe[18] blames a closed circuit of Western curators, others such as Nicodemus and Ogbechie[19] seem to imply a lack of sufficiently qualified or experienced professionals from Africa.

From within Africa complaints are arising over not only the rarity of internationally recognised African curators, but also concerns are being voiced over those curators who are currently visible, the majority of whom are made up of those who have lived and worked in the West for many years. These curators are accused of being unaware of current trends in the visual arts within Africa, instead promoting African artists working outside of the continent, who are more conversant with, for

instance, the popular art of installation. This suggests again that a Western criteria of value is taking preference. In view of this, the study will examine curation in Nigeria largely by means of the evaluation Nigerian curators themselves, including the individuals' background and education, as well as his or her approach to curation and experience in the field. The views of internationally active Nigerian curators will also be assessed, especially in relation to differences between national and international curation.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

This thesis sets out to examine the position of the Nigerian curator in relation to the development of temporary exhibitions of contemporary African art. It is hoped that this examination will suggest possible reasons why so few African curators are recognised internationally: Whether this is a result of a lack of relevant experience or education, or a deliberate exclusion on the part of Western art institutions [determined to uphold the Western canon of art]. The manner in which Nigerian curators approach the organisation of exhibitions will also be addressed, at both the national and international level, in order to establish the values and tastes influencing the decisions of these curators. This will help the researcher to determine the possible value of indigenous curators in the organisation of international exhibitions of contemporary African art works, and to suggest ways in which the status of the Nigerian curator may be improved. The study hopes to answer these questions by:

1. Analysis of art course curriculum and content of the foremost institutions of higher education in Nigeria.
2. Analysis of exhibition catalogues, journals, newspapers, internet sources and official publications.
3. Analysis of supplementary secondary data, including that found in appropriate textbooks.

4. Interviews with a sample of art lecturers and heads of departments of art at the foremost institutions of higher education in Nigeria.
5. Interviews with a sample of Nigerian curators practising within Nigerian.
6. Questionnaires to be filled by a sample of Nigerian curators living and working in the West.

1.4 Justification of the Research

Concern has been voiced over the way in which African art is being shaped by exhibitions organised by an elite of Western curators. Many scholars have concluded that local values and tastes must be recognised in order for a more honest understanding to be proffered in exhibitions, freeing African artists from the pressure to conform to Western preferences. This is endorsed by Barker (1999), who states that: "The context of display is an important issue for art history because it colours our perception and informs our understanding of works of art"[20].

The authority of the curator: Who has the right to curate and how they curate, must be addressed. It has been suggested that the way forward for exhibitions of non-Western art is in a greater contribution to their curation by indigenous curators, art historians, and artists themselves. However, although curators of African decent have emerged over the last decade, such as the Nigerian born Okwui Enwezor, they remain few in number, and under-represented at the international level. Through the opinions and efforts of Nigerian artist-curators it is hoped that the study will be able to determine who is best informed to curate African art, and if the way forward is in a greater participation by African curators then why are so few curate internationally.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The temporary exhibition has become the principal medium for the distribution and reception of art works, and largely determines the ways in which art is talked

about, understood and debated. The value of this study lies in the growing popularity of exhibitions of contemporary African art.

The study will be of interest to all those involved in the study of non-Western art markets, or concerned with the collection and display of contemporary African art works. It is hoped that it will encourage institutions to become more sensitive to issues pertaining to the reception of contemporary African art, such as the possible potentials of a local knowledge, and to consider such issues when selecting curators and curatorial teams. Furthermore, it is hoped that the study will encourage those responsible for academic programmes in African institutions of higher learning to consider the importance of courses in the field of cultural representation, such as curation, and to review programmes where they are found lacking.

1.6 Research Questions

The questions to be addressed in this study are:

1. Why are so few curators of Nigerian decent internationally recognised?
2. Whose values and tastes influence the Nigerian curators selection criteria?
3. What is the value of indigenous curators in the organisation of international exhibitions of contemporary African art works?
4. What is being done to encourage a new direction in the reception of African art?

1.7 Scope and Delimitations of the Research

The study will be delimited to Nigerian curators, and educators responsible for the development of art programmes in Nigeria. The study will concentrate on the field of curation from the 1980 to present, a time in which African art has become increasingly popular in the West and questions of representation have been prompted. These delimitations have been made in order to limit the problem and achieve a more potent analysis as a result.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical background against which the analysis presented in this thesis is to be viewed. First, theoretical approaches to the representation of non-Western cultures are reviewed, followed by an evaluation of texts which illustrate the transferal of these suppositions to the area of exhibition of non-Western art works. Finally, the review will take into account reviews of some of the most significant and illustrative exhibitions of contemporary non-Western art.

2.1 Background

Many art critics and historians, for instance Araeen (1991), McEvilley (1992) and Oguibe (1999), have in recent years taken up the debate of cultural representation with specific reference to the exhibition of non-Western art[21]. The background for such discussions is most often found in Said's (1978) criticism of Oriental scholarship, "Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient", in which the author argues that it is largely through systems of knowledge that the West has been able to construct and promote the concept of the "other", in order to attain and maintain a superior position; which in this study is centred on the Arab-Oriental Muslim. However, the argument is very much applicable to all non-Occidental cultures. This construction, according to Said, begins with the representations of the "Oriental" first formed by travellers in the early eighteenth century. These early representations of an exotic, timeless or classical culture were further developed during the eighteenth century, at the end of which, a system of knowledge based on the cultural domination of the West was firmly in place in centres of Oriental scholarship in Europe.

Although Said does not give any alternatives to "Orientalism" he does raise some far-reaching questions, such as: How does one represent other cultures? Is the notion

of one distinct culture a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation or hostility and aggression?

Hiller (1991) supports Said's argument in a brief account of the way in which African "artifacts" looted from non-Western peoples by the first colonials were incorporated into the permanent collections of Western museums. Like the accounts of early travellers described by Said, these displays, according to Hiller, contributed to the development and propagation of Western stereotypes of the "other". Such displays were made up primarily of masks and religious figurines that, with little attempt at any researched contextualisation, perpetuated fantasies of "exotic", "primitive" peoples. As Hiller rightly stresses during this period of exploration, African and Oceanic art was understood ethnographically as artifact rather than art. The author optimistically concludes that such "myth-making" is losing its potency. However, even in the ethnographic museums referred to, little has changed, with many curators continuing to display works of today's contemporary African artists as anthropological-style exhibits. Works by both Sokari Douglas Camp and Khaled Ben Slimane, for instance, are included in the Africa section of the British Museum, London, alongside traditional art and artifacts. Here they are contextualised with labelling which refers more to the subject matter of the work [alongside Camp's sculpture "Big Masquerade with boat and household on his head" video footage of a Kalabari masquerade is played] than the artist him/herself. Although Camp, openly supports this use of her work[22], it rather diminishes the argument that many African artists and critics are putting forward that the contemporary African artist should be given the right to be seen as an individual. The artist would rather wish not be seen an anonymous representative of a culture [usually associated with the traditional] as in the past, and to be able to present his or her work alongside that of other contemporary artists, in more appropriate surroundings.

Araeen (in Hiller, 1991) delivers a strong argument that takes up the issue of such inappropriate classifications. Referring to the work of Said, the author discusses the way in which modern artists who form "minority" ethnic groups in Britain are excluded from mainstream modernism by an insistence on categorising their art as "ethnic" over and above "modern". The author argues that this categorisation is a means of keeping the non-European artist outside of modern art history. Araeen justifies his argument in an assessment of colonialism, centred again on the role that [Western] education has played in the construction of a dominant culture that represents the racist ideas of superiority and progress. This, according to Araeen, manifests itself in art history by the elevation of European art as the bench-mark by which all other art is to be judged. Unlike Hiller, the author is cynical about any claims of the dissolution of the Western myth of the "other". Araeen's argument that non-Western artists are only visible in the West within the limits of their traditional cultures, although subjective, in the sense that the subject-matter reflects the author's personal experience as an Asian artist working in the United Kingdom, is validated with numerous references and illustrative examples. Araeen's objections to the categorisation "ethnic" are further supported by Jantjes and Serotain (1986) their introduction to the exhibition catalogue "From Two Worlds", in which they speak about the limitations of labels like "Asian", "Indian", and "Afro-Caribbean":

> . . . because in the hierarchy of value 'fine' is generally regarded more than 'applied' and 'art' certainly more than 'craft', the 'ethnic' label can be used to diminish, or at least to question, the standing of art which draws on such traditions, rather than on the traditions of Western European art[23] .

A similar analysis is put forward by McEvilley (1992) who in ten essays develops the argument that the Western aesthetics of the last two hundred years have been determined largely by the ideas of superiority constructed during the colonial period. The author, like Hiller, refers back to the appropriation of African "artifacts" by the colonials, and elaborates by saying:

> In the colonial period, objects made by non-Western cultures were brought back to the West not only as booty but as evidence. They were understood, at however mute a level, as proof of the superiority of the colonialists - that was the point of calling the colonised cultures 'primitive'[24].

McEvilley goes on to allude to Araeen's claim that non-Western art is excluded from the mainstream, as a result of its categorisation as "ethnic", in a reference to the further assessment of African art according to Western canons, "Modernist internationalism was a form of imperialism by which non-Western cultures would assimilate to Western mores. But as Modernism fetishized sameness, post-Modernism fetishizes difference"[25].

Although the recent [post-Modernist] elevation of non-Western cultures and their related art practices could at first sight be seen as a positive development, as both Araeen and McEvilley stress, this elevation does not mean an unlimited assertion of self but again, the demand to assimilate to Western concepts of difference. Unfortunately, even a cursory review of exhibitions in any metropolis of Europe or the United States will acknowledge these assertions, with the art of non-Western artists designated to largely ethnically bound exhibitions produced by smaller institutions rather than mainstream art museums. Nicodemus (1995) gives a thorough examination of the development of this Euro-centred art field, in reference to the theories of French cultural sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu; who asserted that this autonomous field was established in France and developed in the West. The field was sustained by a system of progressive conformity, as is posited by Bourdieu and acknowledged by Nicodemus: "Art does not exist unless it is received and recognised as such"[26]. The author concludes with a condemnation of the concepts of the "progressive" in Western modernity, which preserves this "universal" history of art, with the art of non-Western artists excluded from the field [or mainstream] on the grounds that it is outdated and naive, unable to "play the game by the rules".

Nicodemus, like Araeen and McEvilley, addresses the exclusivity and the dominance of Western art world and speaks in greater depth about the development of structures of segregation, and the subsequent partitioning of "ethnic" art. This separation between Occidental and non-Occidental art reiterates the "we" are "this", "they" are "that" mentality, as described by Said. These criticisms of the Western canon of art seem to be validated in the absence of black artists in the history of modern art.

The centrality of a Western modern art history is clearly displayed in the cover design for an exhibition catalogue, "Cubism and Abstract Art", Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936, by Barr (in Fernie, 1995). The chart shows over 23 styles in a time period of 45 years, between 1890 and 1935, with the art of non-Western cultures represented only in relation to their incorporation by Western art. Barr makes no mention of "European" as a category, or any suggestion of parallel histories of art, and unlike the details of sequential movements in European art, the non-Western art is reduced to the categories: Near Eastern art; Japanese Prints; and Negro Sculpture.

A more positive outlook for the non-Western artist is presented by Belting (in Fernie, 1995), who, although agreeing that the field of art history was elitist in the past, suggests that historians today are questioning the concept of an all-embracing, "universal" history of art. This rejection of a stylistic history, which was determined over the years by an internal criteria of evaluation, according to Belting, came in the breakaway of the avant-garde from the traditional art history, and culminated in a distinction between pre-modern and modern. The subsequent confusion has allowed artists and historians to challenge the evolution of art [and its traditional claim to aesthetic autonomy], and to remove the distinction between art and culture by a greater anthropological self-awareness of their own cultures. Certainly, the materials already examined together with the increase in revisionist exhibitions, confirm Belting's conviction that a challenge is being made to the old art history. These

readings, however, also contradict the author's idealistic positioning of, for instance, non-Western artists in their constant reaffirmation of the stereotyping of these artists and their peripheral positioning in relation to the centre, the Western art world.

2.2 Role of the Curator

Contemporary "ethnic" art exhibitions in the West are criticised today for endorsing "difference" by a growing number of scholars in the field of cultural representation. The role of the cross-cultural art exhibition in relation to cultural representation today is discussed at length in Karp and Lavine (1991). In Karp's introduction, he suggests that: "Exhibitions represent identity, either directly, through assertion, or indirectly, by implication. When cultural 'others' are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not"[26].

This is acknowledged by McEvilley (1992), who refers to the exhibition as a "proposition" which either reinforces or threatens the identity of the viewer. It, therefore, seems that Karp is somewhat justified in continuing that "the most powerful agents in the construction of identity appear to be neither the producers of objects nor the audience but the exhibition makers themselves who have the power to mediate among parties who will not come into contact"[27]. Njami (1999) also supports this view and argues that the primacy of the artist and critic has today been superseded by the curator. He goes on to state that:

> A critic's power is limited to judging but a curator has the power of inclusion or exclusion it is the curator who decides upon the discourse and creates the art in the truest sense. Shows are no longer judged by their content, but by the person responsible for mounting them[28].

The authority of the curator is also brought up in an article by Kasfir (1992), who discusses: who makes meaning for African art, and who or what determines its cultural authenticity. The author, in answering the former question says: "It is difficult not to conclude that it is largely Western curators, collectors, and critics rather than the

cultures and artists who produce it"[29]. However, although this may be true in many respects, two points must be recognised. First, that the curator's ideas must be approved of by the patron, or institution for which he is working; and second, that the audience itself may evade the curator's proposition by confirming their own assumptions about identity in what they see in the exhibitions design and selection. Notwithstanding, it is the curator [usually from the West] who has taken most of the blame for perpetuating the racist assumptions of the "other" that emerged during the colonial period. The majority of criticisms pertain to the overriding desire for "identity" by Western curators, and the portrayal of a homogeneous Africa, retaining the air of the eternal, the ritualistic, the tribal, and the mysterious. This pursuit of an "authentic" Africa is given special attention by Enwezor (1994) who asserts that Africa has been translated as a "National Geographic phenomenon", and continues that:

> . . . through such a construction, an ignorant public's base, theme park appetite for the esoteric, is constantly indulged and fed an ever widening array of stereotypes, with the fiction of a primitivist and pre-modern Africa, without artistic or cultural mobility, embalmed and ancient as a mummy encased in an air-tight glass vatrine[30].

The author proceeds by saying that: "In a world of cross-pollination of ideas, movement between and within cultures, perception and reality, one can no more speak of authentic African art". This is endorsed by Mudimbe (1994), Ogbechie (1998), Enwezor and Oguibe (1999), and Littlefield-Kasfir (1992) amongst others. This "cross-pollination" is manifest in many contemporary African artists' works, some of which, for instance, the acclaimed Nigerian painter Gani Odotukon, have referred to this exchange of influences when speaking about their works[31].

2.3 Alternative Approaches to the Curation of Non-Western Art

In a short essay by Wallach (1998) two distinct contemporary approaches to the curation of art works are described, with illustrative examples. The author discusses, like Belting, the development of a new revised approach to the discipline of art history,

the origins of which, this author puts down to the confrontational politics nurtured in the 1960's. During the sixties students challenged the discipline's "narrow focus on the problems of connoisseurship and artistic 'influence' and its suppositions and biases, revealing sexism, racism and elitism"[32]. According to Wallach, this transformation of art history, however, has made little impact on art exhibitions: The majority are still of the type "American Paradise" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), described in this essay as a "glossy spectacle" produced in a series of spacious, luxurious galleries, insuring that viewers were left in awe by the beauty and power of the paintings displayed. Wallach points out that no mention was made of, for instance, slavery or the civil war, in this "conflict free" version of America's past, and criticises this "return to paradise", saying:

> 'American Paradise' exemplified traditional art historical wisdom: Choose the best works, gather them together under a familiar if tendentious label ('Treasures,' 'Masterpieces,' 'Genius,' 'Paradise'), add wall texts with a smattering of background information, and, voila, success is pretty much assured[33].

The author contrasts this outdated approach with an example of a revisionist exhibition, "The Catskills" (Hudson River Museum, Hudson), here wall texts were educational, and the viewer's attention maintained by thought-invoking juxtapositions. This emphasis on a historical "story", says Wallach, broke away from the "masterpiece-treasure-genius-paradise" syndrome: "No longer reified masterpieces, objects of a disembodied aesthetic contemplation, they connected with a range of nineteenth century cultural practices such as tourism, nature worship, and patriotic beliefs equating American nature with American identity"[34].

The revisionist approach to curation described by Wallach seems particularly appropriate for the display of the art of non-Western cultures, which, as was shown in the background and introductory readings, suffer so much from misinterpretations. However, the author omits any suggestion that in the wrong hands this approach could also be extremely damaging, as it projects convincing narratives [whether accurate or

not] rather than mute extravaganzas. Despite this reservation, the revisionist approach set out by Wallach is encouraging in its complex dialogical character, as the author concludes, "A successful exhibition is not a book on the wall, a narrative with objects as illustrations, but a carefully orchestrated deployment of objects, images, and texts that give viewers opportunities to look, reflect, and to work out meanings"[35].

2.4 Traditional Approaches to the Curation of Non-Western Art

Examples of the "traditional" curatorial approach described by Wallach [in relation to exhibitions of contemporary non-Western art] include: "Hispanic Art in the United States" (1987, Houston Museum of Fine Art); "Magiciens de la Terre" (1989, Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris); "Africa: Art of a Continent" (1995, Royal Academy of Art, London); and "Poetics of Line: Seven Nigerian Artists" (1997, National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC).

An exhibition that did bring non-Western art into a mainstream art museum was Livingstone and Beardsley's "Hispanic Art in the United States". The director of the hosting museum, the Houston Museum of Fine Art, Peter Marzio (in Karp & Lavine, 1991) speaks about the risks taken in introducing "minority" exhibitions into a mainstream museum. But defends his own risk-taking in his belief that museums today have a duty to serve the increasingly culturally diverse local community, and speaks of the pride shown by Hispanic artists when their work was displayed in a museum holding many of the European masters. However, the question that should be raised is whether the exposure of artists in this all-inclusive type of exhibition is sufficient. Marzio's engagement of a Western curatorial team and their subsequent choice of the all-encompassing title "Hispanic art" suggest that any real challenge to perceived images of the Hispanic culture was negated by the need to appeal to the tastes and assumptions of regular patrons. As Wallach emphasises: "A steady diet of commodified culture can only dull the public's critical capacities"[36].

It is interesting to note that Marzio defends the choice of Western curators by asserting that curators with adequate experience and knowledge could not be found in the Hispanic populace. However, as acknowledged Hispanic academics in the art field do exist, for instance Professor Ybarro-Frausto (in Karp & Lavine, 1991) of Stanford University, it is uncertain whether the appointment of Livingstone and Beardsley came from a legitimate desire for an experienced curatorial team, neither of which have an indepth knowledge of Hispanic art, or in the fear that an indepth exhibition [that confronts cultural assumptions] would be met by the incomprehension, or even disapproval of majority audiences.

Jean-Hubert Martin, who was responsible for staging the exhibition "Magiciens de la Terre", is given particular attention in an article by Araeen (1989). Like Livingstone and Beardsley's exhibition, this too was produced in a mainstream art museum, bringing together one hundred artists from Europe and Africa. Martin claims his aim was to return to a purely aesthetic appreciation of the works, and so displayed art works with no contextualisation. However, as Araeen points out, this did not mean the display was free of the old art historical prejudices: First, European art was physically located at the centre of the gallery, as opposed to the African art works to be found at the periphery; and second, the predominance of naive or folk art works of African artists contrasted with the sophisticated examples of the European moderns. Clearly, a selection and presentation was made, whether consciously or not, that distanced African art from that of Europe, and reinforced and justified the elitist Western art field. Araeen accuses Martin of a preoccupation with former anthropological discourse as a central concept, upholding the belief that '"so-called" primitive societies are static, and their artists anonymous. Araeen makes the pertinent observation:

> It appears that the assumption is that Western culture alone has passed from one historical period to another and its contemporary creativity is represented only by modern art. Can one avoid an implication here that other cultures, in spite of their contacts with the West, do not yet have a modern consciousness? Or if they do, it is not important to their creativity?[37]

Like Livingstone and Beardsley, Martin made his selection, as he himself states in an interview with Benjamin Buchloh (1989), from his personal "artistic intuition". The choices made seem to confirm Araeen's belief that aesthetic choices are made according to the dominant social views of the curator's culture. The result is meticulously dissected by Araeen, revealing how a whole continent made up of varied modern art practices can be reduced to one white male's preferences and prejudices.

This is again demonstrated in Tom Philips selection procedure for "Africa: The Art of a Continent", who again as sole curator [although advised by selected European anthropologists] seemed to allude to the "primitive" this time in a preference for objects, including Pathelolithic tools, over paintings. The development of a purely "traditional" focus for exhibitions is critiqued by Picton (1996). The author includes details concerning the dismissal of the proposed curator, Susan Vogel, because of her insistence on including the development of twentieth century African art. As a response to this preference for the traditional, "complimentary" exhibitions of contemporary art were organised in the creation of a season of African arts, "africa95", this, Picton argues, gave an incorrect division between the contemporary and traditional in African art. Likewise, a similar critique is put forward by Ross who also reiterates criticisms pertaining to the exhibition category "Hispanic art", by condemning Philips for thinking that an intelligent survey of the arts of Africa could be accomplished in a single exhibition, and continues, "I seriously doubt that anyone would suggest doing a show titled 'Europe: The Art of a Continent'. And if such a project were to be attempted, what would be the reaction if art of the twentieth century were excluded!" [38]

However, although such simplistic surveys cannot be condoned, the inclusion of contemporary African art would have only exaggerated the shallowness of Philip's appraisal. Smaller institutions did offer up contemporary alternatives, and the importance of some of which should not be undermined by criticisms pertaining to

their relationship with the Royal Academy show piece. In recognition of Marzio's stance, the latter exhibition has also received considerable praise for bringing African art into a mainstream art museum. Picton (1996) in reference to "africa95", of which "Africa: Art of a Continent" was at it's centre, reluctantly admits that: ". . . a far wider range of material was placed before the British public than would otherwise have been possible"[39]. In another critical overview of the "africa95" season of arts, Silva (in Deepwell, 1997) [although also showing her reservations over the representation of 45 countries in one exhibition, and her anger by the suggestion that art in Africa ended at the turn of the century] also applauds the efforts of Phillips for presenting "exquisite objects" of non-Western cultures that "restored pride in a cultural and artistic heritage"[40].

Whilst it is true that diverse audiences were recorded for all the reviewed exhibitions, over a quarter of a million attended the latter, this should not overshadow criticisms of misrepresentation. After all these mistakes are being absorbed by an even greater number of attendees. The principal curators of such exhibitions are often Western collectors, such as Andre Magnin, Jean-Christophe Pigozzi and Robert Loder, or anthropologists like Simon Ottenberg. The recurring criticism of the appointment of Western collectors and anthropologists as curators is given more specific treatment by Picton (1993) and Nzegwu (1999). Picton voices his concerns over the suitability of Western curators and collectors in defining contemporary African art for the general art viewer. The author explains that a local criteria of value is generally dismissed by such Western "mediators" in favour of their own preferences and perceptions; selection procedures and categorisation offer a limited [Euro-centric] view of contemporary art in Africa which overlooks its diversities. Picton concludes that selectivity (as with other forms of categorisation) may not be wrong in itself, but that who is making the selection and in what circumstances must be questioned. It is important to note that Picton does not condemn these curators and collectors per se, as of course they are beneficial patrons to selected artists, but rather alerts the reader

to their "promotion" as "mediators" of contemporary African art with the power to shape public knowledge and international art markets.

Another author concerned with the negative effects of curatorial control when in the wrong hands is Bamgboye (1999) who agrees with the points already generally raised that Western curatorial analysis is based on "the passe of cultural identity and alterity", and also that artists are often grouped by their geographical origins despite differences in "influences, concerns, and professional aspirations". And goes on to assert that artists are under economic pressure to comply with Western curators, and collectors' stereotypical construct of what contemporary non-Western art should be.

The appointment of Western anthropologists as curators, like Ottenberg, of African art seems to reveal the Western premise that contemporary African art is to be investigated for its ethnic attributes as anonymous objects rather than as individual acts of creativity. Issues pertaining to such appointments, are given a more specific analysis by Nzegwu (1999) who takes an exhibition of contemporary Nigerian art by anthropologist Simon Ottenberg to illustrate her argument. The author questions the qualifications of Ottenberg in undertaking such a venture and makes the valid point that: "Whilst anthropologists are given free range to define and curate Africa's art, rarely would an anthropologist or sociologist be allowed to curate a major exhibition of a First World nation"[41].

Nzegwu again protests that such curators working within an anthropological framework often make decisions based on the discipline, rejecting the legitimacy of non-traditional modern African art. This racist bias of the discipline has been assessed by a number of non-Western scholars, including: Owusu (1978), Asad (1973), and with specific reference to art, Enwonwu (1956). The author also warns that the empathy of Ottenberg towards African cultures "becomes an effective mask of a less than rigorous scholarship". Nzegwu concludes by suggesting that what is called for in

the organisation of an exhibition is: ". . . detailed theoretical issues that are germane to both global art and local art, familiarity with local artistic movements and their political concerns, and an informed appreciation of the aesthetic space"[42].

The problems raised in these selected examples of cross-cultural exhibitions all seem to confirm the concerns raised by Njami (1999) and Kasfir (1992, 1999) that curators generally have too much authority. This seems particularly problematic in the cases examined, when the curators are "outsiders", as they bring to the selection and exhibition process a number of assumptions with regards to the "culture" to be exhibited. The reasons why Western curators usually take preference over art professionals indigenous to the culture being exhibited must be addressed.

2.5 Revisionist Approaches to the Curation of Non-Western Art

The revisionist approach to exhibition design is most clearly demonstrated in Susan Vogel's "experiments" in the presentation of African art, including "Perspectives: Angles on African Art" and "Art/artifact". For example, Vogel (in Karp & Lavine, 1991) explains that the exhibition "Art/artifact" was not meant to be about African art or Africa, but about "the perception and museum experience, focusing on the ways Westerners have classified and exhibited African objects [some as art others as artifact] over the last century"[43]. Vogel justifies her approach as a means of encouraging audiences to question the West's strategies for collection and display and how they influence the way in which African art is viewed. These exhibitions are much more complex in their motive and do challenge former ethnographical practices, however the possibility that audiences will not understand these motives and instead merely absorb the stereotypes presented, is of some concern. It is unfortunate that in a subsequent exhibition, "Africa Explores", Vogel repeats the mistake often made by many of her [less qualified] contemporaries in attempting to create categories by which contemporary African art is to be understood. These again projected false distinctions and elevated works by naive or folk artists at the expense of those of the academically

trained. Susan Vogel is probably the most distinguished and well qualified of all the Western curators currently working with African art, however it is revealing that despite an art historical background such indiscretions are unnoticed or knowingly disregarded. This implies that even well-educated professionals with adequate experience in the field are capable of misrepresentations, whether intentional, or not.

The logical answer to many of these problems seems to be in a greater involvement by "insiders" in the curation of their own art, those with what Njami (1999) refers to as an "earthy, intimate human knowledge" rather than an academic knowledge contaminated by its racist origins. However, as Oguibe reveals in an open letter on the internet, concerning the growth of international exhibitions, although African curators are emerging on the international circuit, the majority of high-profile shows are monopolised by Western curators, at best African curators and art historians are consulted.

This consultation approach was carried out in the organisation of the revisionist exhibition "Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa". The exhibition and its head curator, [anthropologist] Clementine Deliss, have been praised by some[44] for producing an exhibition of purely modern African art in contrast with the exhibition "Africa: Art of a Continent" (Both exhibitions took place as part of the "africa95" season of events held in London). Whilst others like Nicodemus (1996) and Ogbechie (1997) have their reservations. In Nicodemus's paper a credible challenge is made to the exhibition, in which the author criticises Deliss for using a predetermined anthropological framework [with the already mentioned failings] rather than a straight forward art historical approach. The author goes on to reveal the professional incompetence of certain African co-curators, and quite rightly states that if curators with appropriate knowledge and experience can not be found then the inclusion of Africans is no more than a gesture of political correctness. Ogbechie (1997) makes an exceptional critique of the same exhibition. Like Nicodemus (1996, 1997), he

questions the credibility of the co-curators, asking whether artists are equipped to evaluate the work of other artists. The author also points to a paternalism in the choice of co-curators, and adds that there is little to gain by the appointment of "insiders" if they are to work to a predetermined framework, "becoming little more than field hands executing carefully choreographed intentions"[45]. This last comment is mirrored in Oguibe's (1993) reference to such curators as "stagehands in a ventriloquist's show"[46]. Ogbechie ends with the strong recommendation that:

> We need to denounce totalizing exhibitions as exercises in unbridled ambition, especially in the practice of curators who arrogate to themselves the right to define African art, impose preconceived criteria of evaluation on its presentation, and select its spokespersons (or storytellers). In the same manner, we need to criticise African artists and curators who adopt platforms like the one provided by Seven Stories as a chance to foster self-indulgent narratives[47].

These valid criticisms show the danger of the revisionist approach when in inexperienced hands. For instance, Ogbechie makes the further observation that in Okeke's Nigerian "story" the author makes a linear narrative concentrating on artists associated with the Uli revivalist movement [and adherents of the subsequent principal of "synthesis"]. If this is correct, then not only does "Seven stories" present a distorted history of art in Nigeria, but it is also responsible for shaping a possible canon for Nigerian art. As Ogbechie notes, artists outside of this "Zaria nexus", such as the important female artists Afi Ekong and Kaltume Gana are excluded.

The criticisms of "Seven Stories" reiterate those concerning Vogel, that although academically sound are still influenced by their own social views and aesthetic concerns, but also imply a lack of sufficiently qualified African curators. As African artists, art historians, and curators, were only appointed as subordinates to the Western curator, Deliss, in "Seven Stories", it remains unclear whether African curators can provide real alternatives to Western interpretations of contemporary African art. A much needed background to these critiques of "Seven Stories" is given

in an overview of "africa95" by Elspeth Court (in Barker, 1999) who reiterates many of the views given in more specific papers, and places the season in an art historical context, giving details of the development of exhibitions prior to its staging and, therefore, allowing the reader to draw useful comparisons and contrasts. The article is presented in a useful reader for self-study students by Barker, in which a basic history of different exhibitionary types and styles is explored.

2.6 Alternative Approaches by Non-Western Curators

The majority of the writers mentioned in this review call for a change in the curatorial control of exhibitions of non-Western, or African, art. The general consensus is that control should be transferred from Western anthropologists to experienced and qualified indigenous curators. Non-Western academics propose two alternative approaches, on the one hand pluralism is advocated as a political and aesthetic strategy for incorporating alternative representations[48] and on the other, a more radical challenge to the central idioms of "Eurocentred art" is called for[49]. However, with regards to the latter perspective, the advice of Said seems most pertinent; that the answer to "Orientalism" is not "Occidentalism".

An exhibition that makes the latter challenge is that of B.N. Goswamy[50] in his ingenious exhibition of Indian art, "Rasa: les neuf visages de l'art Indien". Here the curator, as an "insider" with considerable knowledge of Indian art as a professor of Indian art history, uses the Indian aesthetic concept called "rasa" for the organisation of the exhibition. This revisionist exhibition is a wonderful example of what can be done by an "insider" with both an academic and "earthy" knowledge of the culture to be exhibited.

In relation to contemporary African art, a small number of indigenous curators have emerged on the international art circuit over the last decade. However, although scant information is available on their exhibitions, and of course exhibition catalogues

are published, no discussion has been found concerning, for instance: Their emergence onto the international exhibitionary circuit; Why international exhibitions are still dominated by Westerners, even though this often means time consuming consultation with African art historians and/or artists. Is this a symptom of a lack of qualified and experienced curators from Africa? Or is it a symptom of an international exhibitionary circuit still plagued by cultural domination? How are curators within Africa, and expatriate African curators making efforts to encourage a redefinition of African art. What programmes and initiatives are being made to draw the curators working outside of Africa, closer to their colleagues [both curators and artists] within the continent? And what more can be done?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the setting and strategy for investigating the research questions and hypothesis referred to in Chapter 1 (1.6 Research Questions and Hypothesis, p.7). The regions to be visited during field work are outlined, including information regarding institutions located within these areas, and then the reasons for a historical approach to the analysis and reporting of the data are detailed before the population of the study is identified. This is followed by an explanation of the conceptual and practical justifications for the research methods.

3.1 Research Setting

Nigeria was selected as the primary setting for this research, although Nigerian curators presently working outside of the country will also be questioned. The choice of location was made not only because of financial limitations, but also as a response to the vigorous artistic activity that has developed since Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960, and the large number of institutes of higher education subsequently offering courses in the visual arts and art history. The increasing number of independent Nigerian curators working on international projects, and their vocality on critical issues regarding the reception of contemporary African art, further influenced the selection of Nigeria as the setting for this research. The northern, south-eastern, and south-western regions of Nigeria will be visited to ensure that an accurate analysis of the state of curation and curatorial [or related] studies within the country is given. A map of Nigeria showing the locations of all institutions visited is given in Plate I, p.29.

The institutions selected for this study are: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; the Institute of Management Technology, Enugu; the

University of Benin, Benin; Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi; and Yaba College of Technology, Lagos.

Plate I

3.2 Research Design

The research design corresponds with the historical design outlined by Osuala (1982), who emphasises that the purpose of which, is not only to "arrive at an accurate account of the past", but also to "gain a clearer perspective of the present"[51]. This view is acknowledged by Swetnam (2000), who defines historical research as: "A structured study of past events to help with current problems or understanding"[52]. The style of the historical research method is principally qualitative and, therefore, the manner of writing is primarily descriptive. This type of research method and style of writing, was first introduced for the study of Nigerian art by the art historian Roy Seiber (1957) in a dissertation for the University of Iowa, titled "African Tribal Sculpture". Today, the descriptive style remains the favoured method of presenting art historical research by many, and this is exemplified in the relatively recent work of Kasfir (1999), who examines contemporary African art. However, a strict adherence to the purely descriptive method has, nevertheless, been challenged by more radical art historians and theorists. For instance, Oguibe (1999) asserts that due to the racist origins of the discipline, and the subsequent questioning of art and culture, a more critical engagement with art historical subjects must be made. This view is clearly presented by Oguibe:

> Our aim is not only to provide an alternative art history, but also to lay a groundwork for its methodology. We strongly believe that it is in the methodology that art history confronts the proper subject of its operation, that the most difficult and durable questions of its discriminations and discernments occur, that the flawed arguments and perspectives are engaged, that new interpretations are created, and that contestations [necessary for a sustained intellectual productivity] are tackled[53].

In light of this view, and due to the cultural-political nature of this study, the research method of this study, therefore, combines the descriptive method with a more critical analysis of the subject under investigation.

Data for the present study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. It is expected that secondary sources of data, including quoted material and textbooks, will contribute to a more valid and reliable research. The majority of information, however, was derived from primary sources, the importance of which is stressed by various commentators[54]. These consisted of all items considered to have a direct physical relationship with the research topic, including journals, newspapers, internet sources, official publications, exhibition catalogues, transcriptions and questionnaires.

3.3 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The population of the study is composed of a sample of Nigerian curators working, or having worked, within and/or outside of Nigeria, and also Nigerian art lecturers presently employed in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. For the purpose of this study the "curator" is defined specifically as a director of visual art exhibitions, rather than a manager or custodian of a museum. The criteria used for selection as a "curator" is a recognised professionality in the field of curation, and this is demonstrated by: A consistency over the last two decades of the curation of themed, temporary exhibitions of contemporary African art; and the writing of published forwards and texts for exhibition catalogues.

A preliminary population list for Nigerian curators was compiled by consultation with artists and art historians presently serving as lecturers in the Department of Fine Arts at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. However, only a small proportion of the exhibition organisers suggested fulfilled the requirements of the aforementioned criteria for selection as a curator. This may be due, in part, to the relative infancy of

the temporary exhibition of visual arts in Nigeria, as although art works were displayed for public viewing by various patrons of art, such as Aina Onabolu, at halls and other public venues as early as the 1920's, these exhibitions were purely non-professional ventures. A more professional approach to the exhibition of art in Nigeria was linked to the establishment, and development of first generation galleries throughout the 1960's and 1970's, including the Asele Gallery, Kafanchan, the New Cultural Studio, Ibadan, and the Exhibition Centre, Lagos. For instance, the first temporary exhibition to be viewed at the Exhibition Centre, established in 1946, was that organised by the Society of Nigerian Artists, as their inaugural exhibition in January, 1964.

In response to the small proportion of candidates fulfilling the criteria for "curator", it was finally decided that all those fulfilling the criteria should be approached. There was no bias in this selection and, therefore, the population list should be viewed as random. Those who subsequently agreed to participate in the research are as follows: 1. The sample population list for independent Nigerian curators living and working in Nigeria is: Kunle Filani; C. Krydz Ikwuemesi; Simon Ikpakronyi; Elizabeth Jibunoh and Ekpo Udo-Udoma. 2.The population list for independent Nigerian curators currently living and working outside of Nigeria is: Dele Jegede, Olu Oguibe, Sylvestor Ogbechie, Chika Okeke, Bisi Silva, Nkiru Nzegwu, Kazeem Adeleke, Odili Donald Odita, and Okwui Enwezor.

Due to the higher proportion of semi-professional curators in Nigeria, who are largely made up of art lecturers and practising artists, it was decided that a further population list should be made again with the assistance of art lecturers working in the Department of Fine Arts at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The criteria for inclusion into this population list was a consistent experience in the curation of exhibitions of contemporary African art, and a good knowledge of the visual art or art history course curriculums as are implemented at the various departments of fine arts where the lecturers are presently engaged. Those included in this sample population were questioned with the same schedule as used with the independent Nigerian curators

included in the first list. They were also given six additional questions related to their work as art lecturers within the higher education system in Nigeria. These six questions were also posed to the head of each department of fine art visited for the study in order to aid the validity of lecturer interviews. These are: O.Oyeoku of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; P.Mamza of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; M.Omoighe of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos; E.Erimona of the University of Benin, Benin; O.Onyeneke of the Institute of Management Technology, Enugu; and H.Uhunmwagho of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

The sample population list for art lecturers working in Nigerian institutions of higher learning is: E. Anatsui, O. Oloidi of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; J. Buhari and J.Jari of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; M. Omoighe, and O. Amoda of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos; M. Imonikebe and A. Bardi of the University of Benin, Benin; A. Adewunmi, and O Ikenegbu of the Institute of Management Technology, Enugu; and J. Ehigiamusoe and S. Athekamhe of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

Sample sizes for this study are relatively small, however, as is stated in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) such a limited populace is to be expected of the qualitative style of research. The in-depth research of Nigerian curators and curatorial practice should, nevertheless, prove to be transferable, and comparable, to other countries within Africa. This is indicated in the various comparisons that can be made between countries within Africa with strong, developed graduate programmes in the visual arts. For instance, many sub-Saharan African countries share similarities in the genesis and development of education in the visual arts, and the subsequent visibility of indigenous curators on the international exhibitionary circuit. As Ikwuemesi (2002) concluded of questions raised by the nine countries represented in the Pan-African Circle of Artists' conference on the Status, Role and Working Condition of the Artist in Africa: ". . . issues raised and the attendant debates cut across regions of Africa.

Indeed the picture that emerges is that most African countries share the same problems as far as art and culture are concerned"[55]. Moreover, on this matter of comparability and translatability, Schofield (1993) suggests that it is important in qualitative research to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalizable to another situation.

Two research instruments have been chosen for the present study: the interview and the questionnaire. The choice of two research instruments complies with the recommendation given by Millar (1970) who justifies the choice of multiple instruments as ensuring a greater degree of credibility of research results. Interview schedules were constructed of six, twenty-one, and twenty-seven questions, for oral interviews with the head of each department of fine art visited, independent curators and art lecturers respectively. Although the schedules were conformed to in order to restrict bias, the open-ended style of questions chosen enabled a deeper probing of the interviewee where necessary. Another advantage of this open-ended approach is that whilst the structured nature provides a greater uniformity of responses, enabling the researcher to easily process answers, it still allows for the development of questions as the interview proceeds. As Swetnam (2000) points out: "A semi-structured approach may elicit startling and personal information . . ."[56]. The semi-structured interview has been favoured by many researchers of art history in Africa, including: Willett (1978), Babalola (1981), Beier (1988), and more recently Kasfir (1999). The interviews for this study were tape-recorded for comparative analysis whenever permission was granted, if declined, notes were taken. In order to avoid too much decontextualisation during transcription, data such as the tone, inflection of the voice, pauses and the mood of the speaker were also noted.

Where location did not allow for such intimate contact, as was the case for the international curators, the interview was replaced with a six point questionnaire. Questionnaires were open-ended in response to the small-scale nature of the research, and in order to best reflect the style of interviews carried out in Nigeria. The open-ended questionnaire is recommended by Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2000) who argue that: "an opened-ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candor which are [. . .] the hallmarks of qualitative data"[57].

Both interview schedules and the questionnaires have undergone corrections after considerable consultation with art history lecturers at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and a pilot of the interview schedules with art lecturers at the University of Benin, Benin between May and July 2002. For instance, the advantage of an open-ended style of questionnaire for small-scale research was suggested, and certain questions were queried over lack of comprehension or distinctiveness, and whether they led the interviewee. Any further difficulties incurred by misunderstood items or inadequate responses were eliminated by follow up with the individual participants. It should be noted that the responses of these art lecturers were not utilised as part of the sample for the main study.

Fieldwork[58] was carried out within Nigeria only, during the months of August-December 2002. Before fieldwork commenced the questionnaire was sent to the nine curators referred to in the population list for Nigerian curators living and working predominantly in the West, by means of electronic mail. The date for initial correspondence with these curators is 17th February 2002, and reminders for the submittal of answers were issued on 17th March 2002.

Research in the field was carried out in three time periods, the first consisting of interviews with curators and art lecturers located in the south eastern states of Nigeria,

the second with those located in the south and south west, and the third with those located in the north of the country. Research assistants were employed throughout the interviewing stage of this study: for the eastern region of Nigeria Ms. Chidimma Nwonkwo (BA, MFA Painting, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria); and for the south Ms. Aver Goya (BA Media, University of Jos, Jos). These assistants helped in the basic requirements of the research, such as photocopying and easing the locating of the various institutions and galleries visited.

Additional primary sources, consisting of a random sample of exhibition catalogues, and official documentation pertaining to art department courses (for example curriculum/course outline), were gathered during the field work period from all participants resident in Nigeria. Catalogues of exhibitions organised by international curators were also sourced.

As by its very nature as "historical", this research is principally qualitative, and therefore the data analysis of this study features descriptive discussion and interpretation of findings. The analysis follows four stages set out by Cohen, et al (2000): "Generating natural units of meaning; classifying, categorising and ordering these units of meaning; structuring narratives to describe the interview contents; interpreting the interview data"[59]. Data were postcoded[60], by subjecting interview transcriptions to content analysis and submitting it to a scoring procedure[61], as set out by Brenner, et al (1985). This material was validated by the documentary data collected, such as exhibition catalogues, reviews, and official documentation, after establishing the authenticity and genuineness of this additional data.

All oral interviews were transcribed, with comprehensive details of the individual interviewees, in Appendix I, p.95. The returned questionnaires are also documented in

full in Appendix II, p.152. Furthermore, precise time schedules for fieldwork carried out within Nigeria are given in Appendix III, p.165.

The profiles of all participating Nigerian curators working internationally are also detailed in Appendix VI, p.169.

3.4 Problems of Field Work

Respondents within Nigeria were generally highly accommodating, all but Simon Ikpakronyi and Ekpo Udo-Udoma were interviewed in person whereas Ikpakronyi and Udoma replied in writing and electronic mail respectively to the same interview schedule. However, certain problems were encountered with those curators living and working internationally. Initially all but two curators responded positively to the request for an online 'interview'; those who did not reply were Okwui Enwezor and Nkiru Nzegwu. However, as Enwezor has published texts relevant to the area under investigation, these secondary sources were used alongside primary data collected from the participating curators where necessary.

Furthermore, Olu Oguibe requested that the six question on-line interview schedule sent to all email correspondents be revised, omitting questions that might have already been answered in part by the curator on the internet. Notwithstanding this request, Oguibe finally responded to the original questions on the 14th July, 2003.

Reminders were emailed to all curators who had responded positively to the initial request for participation (14 January 2003) on the 17th March 2003, and then once every following month. Responses were received as follows: Bisi Silva, 25th April 2003; Chika Okeke, 29th April 2003; Sylvester Ogbechie, 17th June 2003; Olu Oguibe, 14th July 2003. No response was forthcoming from Dele Jegede, Odili Donald Odita, or Kazeem Adeleke despite monthly reminders.

The delays incurred as a result of the use of the internet, and electronic mail as a medium of communication for international respondents, may have been overcome with a more personal initial contact, such as the telephone. Personal conversation were carried out by interviewer with the interviewees Silva and Okeke, and perhaps as a consequence of this contact these two interviewees were the first to respond to the following email questionnaire. An economically viable alternative to the email questionnaire, that would not have involved the interviewer incurring substantial travel costs, should have been found in the "chat room" service provided by various email service providers, whereby an online conversation can be carried out. In different circumstances respondents could have been contacted and appointments been made for this type of correspondence, however due to the location of the interviewer this was not a practical alternative due to the often erratic internet services within Nigeria at present.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter features the discussion and interpretation of findings made from the research. The presentation of full transcriptions of oral interview schedules, and completed written questionnaires are given in Appendices I and II respectively. The chapter is divided into three principal areas of investigation: "Education and Curation in Nigeria", which addresses the question of what actually qualifies someone as a curator of contemporary African art works in Nigeria. The section refers to the personal views of Nigerian curators, the development of tertiary course curriculums [and their content] in the visual arts and art history since their inception, and concludes with a discussion of the relevance of current course content to the area of curation and exhibition. The second section, "Experience and Curation in Nigeria", looks at the experience of Nigerian curators, and the demands of the national exhibition, with specific reference to the areas of location, identity, and aesthetic values. Changes in exhibitionary practice are also addressed with particular attention paid to the funding of projects, and the effect of both local and international patronage on the art exhibition in Nigeria. The third area, "Nigerian Curators in the West", examines the curatorial practice of expatriate Nigerian curators, again with reference to the areas of location, identity, and aesthetic values. The views of both national and international curators are then given in reference to the role of African curators in the Diaspora and the exhibition of contemporary African art.

4.1 Education and Curation in Nigeria

In response to criticisms made by art critics, Nicodemus (1997) and Ogbechie (1997, 1998) that there is a lack of sufficiently qualified [and experienced] curators of contemporary art within Africa, it was first felt appropriate to ask all interviewees within Nigeria to identify themselves professionally. Amongst the eleven art lecturers

interviewed, it was perhaps not surprising to find that none identified themselves as curators per se, but rather as artists, art historians, art critics, art theorists, art administrators, and art lecturers. Although often finding themselves in control of exhibitions of art, these professionals are academically qualified solely as artists or art historians, and therefore generally describe themselves principally as such, some with further reference to their shared status as art lecturers. A more unexpected finding, however, was that all but two respondents from the sample of six independent curators interviewed also declined to accept the tag "curator", despite their considerable experience in the field. The respondents who accepted this tag were Simon Ikpakronyi and Elizabeth Jibunoh. However, although these two respondents did not give a reason for this acceptance, it is likely that it is due to their official employment status as curators. Ikpakronyi is a curator for the National Gallery of Art, Abuja, whilst Jibunoh is a joint partner in the private venture, the Bona Art Gallery, Enugu. All other respondents worked as freelance curators and referred to themselves, again as artists and art critics, but never as curators.

Yet the overall resistance to the tag "curator" may not be in a direct response to an employment definition, as it was also noted that the majority of the art lecturers questioned, although employed as such, still referred to themselves predominantly as artists or art historians rather than lecturers. In fact, only four art lecturers described themselves first and foremostly as a college or university lecturer or teacher. These were: Adewunmi; Jari; Amoda; and Imonikebe. The responses made by art lecturers, to the question of professional status seems to reflect educational background rather than official positions currently being held, as the majority of interviewees trained at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels as artists or art historians. The only exception is Jibunoh, who is a graduate of English. If this resistance to the tag "curator" is indeed in response to academic qualifications and not profession, then this could be seen to acknowledge the suggestion made by critics such as Nicodemus, that there is a lack of adequately qualified curators in Africa. None of the respondents held

a qualification directly related to curatorship, although the independent curator, Ekpo Udo Udoma, does possess a post-graduate qualification in Art Management from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York.

Despite this general reluctance to define themselves as "curators", when asked about their academic knowledge, many of the respondents went on to defend their own qualifications in relation to the field of curation, and to further contest the importance, or relevance, of more specific curatorial qualifications. Many argued that to be an artist alone was enough to organise an art exhibition, for instance the artist and art lecturer, Jerry Buhari, stressed the significant qualities of an artist: "I can lay no claim to formal qualifications with any specific relevance to curation, but as an artist l do understand the sensibilities of artists and art works". Likewise, the graphics lecturer, Ayo Adewunmi, was of the opinion that a masters degree in painting and basic art history was sufficient, and that more specialist qualifications were not needed. Again this view was reiterated by Krydz Ikwuemesi who, like several other respondents, including Filani, Omoighe and Ezeudu, also referred to the importance of reading widely about other exhibitions: "I have no formal training in curation, only painting, however l read extensively about the work of other curators. I don't feel that to be a curator you have to be academically trained, the training of an artist should be enough". The artist and lecturer, El Anatsui went further to refute that any qualification at all should be a prerequisite to the organisation of an exhibition of contemporary art: "My qualifications? I am a human being with sensitivity, one does not need to be an art historian to curate".

It could therefore, be presumed that the majority of individuals working as "curators" in Nigeria were of the opinion that the skills and qualities associated with an academically trained artist were sufficient as the mandatory requirements of an individual embarking upon the organisation of an art exhibition. This view has, in some respects, been endorsed by various international exhibitions, such as "Accident

& Design" and "Seven Stories", where African artists were given an organisational capacity. The co-curator of "Accident & Design", Annabelle Nwankwo (1998), defends the appointment of indigenous curators:

> African artists have continuously remained outside the discourse and literature on world contemporary art, and it is up to them to turn the tide of change and correct it. It was with this conviction that this project was embarked upon, which would concentrate on the visual arts by giving the artists the opportunity to voice their concerns and realities in their own words without bias, patronisation, manipulation or contamination[62].

The suitability of artists as curators has also been supported by the American curator, Susan Vogel (1999), who in answer to the question: "How do we legitimately understand or appreciate art from a culture we do not thoroughly know?" referred to the African artist-curators of the exhibition "Perspectives: Angles on African Art", explaining that: "The artist co-curators were the least preoccupied by the cultural context of the objects, which they confidently approached as pure sculptural form"[63]. Notwithstanding former criticisms made of the qualification and experience of some artist-curators, Nicodemus (1995) also poses that the authorship or co-authorship, of artists is needed in order to break down the Western bias of the curation of non-Western art works in the West. The critic argues that:

> In order to manage the double role of presenting adequately art from another culture and at the same time acting as a cultural broker negotiating the reception of it in the cultural context where the exhibition is shown, the curatorial team must include artists and other specialists from the curated area - all from the beginning of the project and in an intense, open dialogue[64].

Although the points raised do give some reasonable justification for the use of artists as curators, the appointment of an artist with little or no art historical or art theoretical background may compromise professionality when working without the guidance of a curator who is well informed on contemporary African art and its discourse. For instance, some of the personal experiences of art history relayed [and received by many as art historical fact] in the artist-curator led exhibition "Seven

Stories" were flawed due to the subjectivity [and self-indulgence] of their creators. This is most clearly demonstrated in the egoism of the Senegalese artist-curator, El Hadj, in the predominance of his own works at the exclusion of other Senegalese artists. African artist-curators and their curatorial partnerships must build on professional competence.

If not a response to professional status, or any specific curatorial qualification, then why were so many of the Nigerian artists [and art historians] interviewed initially so reluctant to call themselves curators? If no specific curatorial courses are currently available in Nigeria, then are courses of art and art history in Nigerian universities and colleges relevant, and adequate to qualify an individual as a curator?

4.1.1 Fine Art Course Curricula in Nigeria

Art lecturers and art courses, including art history, were questioned further in order to establish the extent of both theoretical and practical skills, relevant to the field of curation acquired at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Nigeria. Of the six institutions of higher education used in the study, not one of the departments of fine arts had specific curatorial courses on the curriculum. Although two courses specific to curation are outlined by the National Universities Commission[65], "Museology" [taught in combination with art history] and "Museum Studies and Tourism", it should be noted that only the latter was currently offered in the Department of Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This course covers the areas of techniques, cataloguing, presentation and display of artifacts [not modern art works]. A similar course titled "Art Promotion and Patronage" is taught to students of art history at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, although as the course title indicates, the course is not specific to the display and reception of art works. None of the courses mentioned gave specialist knowledge in the curation of contemporary art works and, therefore, cannot be seen to qualify someone to practice curation professionally.

The potential cause of this absence was given some attention. The art history lecturer Ola Oloidi, suggested that: "Curatorship in Nigeria is not yet seen as important, but as incidental. It is not yet seen as a unique profession in relation to art". This observation was acknowledged by the painter and art historian, Jacob Jari [along with the majority of art lecturers], who went on to make the valid point that the inception of specialised curatorial courses are, in fact, fairly recent elsewhere in the world. For example, it was not until 1992 that the Masters course "Visual Arts Administration: Curating and Commissioning Contemporary Art" was established at the Royal College of Art, London. And it was only in 2001 that the primary focus of the course was changed to curation, this is reflected in the current course title, "Curating Contemporary Art".

A bias towards the practical skills of painting, drawing, and sculpture within departments of fine art, rather than theoretical knowledge was, nevertheless, pointed out by seven of the sixteen art lecturers and current heads of departments interviewed for the study. For instance, Helen Uhunmwagho, the current head of the Department of Fine Arts, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, remarked that fine arts courses held at the polytechnic concentrate on the training of artists, and therefore the courses are practical; the application of art and the appreciation of art.

The likely reason for this bias was given some thought by the lecturer, Olu Amoda, who blamed the colonial legacy of Nigeria for the lack of attention paid today to theoretical issues in departments of fine art throughout the country. The issue of colonialism, and its impact upon education in the visual arts, was also brought up by Captain Usman Mu'azu (in Jari & Nwankwo, 1998). In the foreword to the retrospective exhibition "Accident & Design", Mu'azu criticises the Western models from which art courses were developed in Africa. The imposition of a euro-centred, classical approach to fine arts, as referred to by Amoda and Mu'azu, during the colonial era certainly does seem to have brought about an emphasis on the practical,

rather than the theoretical, as was the then model for the teaching of art at Goldsmiths School of Art, London. The euro-centrism of art courses was challenged by students during the 1950's, who, as Nigeria approached independence, sought to assert their collective identities as Nigerians in support of the new nationalism in their art. However, although this was a critical move for art practice in Nigerian universities, it has not been followed by an emergence of any significant art critical, theoretical discourse, in fine arts course curricula. For example, the course curriculum for the masters qualification in either painting or sculpture at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, still retains a preference for the practical models as were prescribed at the inception of the university.

The only courses to diverge from this practical bias at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, are indicated in the 1995/1996 departmental course curriculum and course outline guide [still being used today without alteration], as: FAA 513 History of Painting; and FAA 523 - History of Sculpture. These are described in the post-graduate course guide as: "A study of a chosen painting, painter [or sculpture, sculptor] or movement from Africa or elsewhere related to the students project presented in the form of a written paper".

Notwithstanding, some lecturers argued that although more appropriate and specific courses were not yet available, that there were at least some courses relevant to the exhibition of contemporary art works. For instance, Jerry Buhari, the former head of the Department of Fine Arts at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, discussed three courses that in his opinion were relevant to the field of curation. These were: "Art Criticism"; "Contemporary Artists and New Trends"; "Aesthetic and Philosophical Issues in Painting and Sculpture"; and "African Images and Motifs". Buhari did concede, however, that the content and delivery of these courses might not bring about an appropriate awareness. As the lecturer of "Aesthetics and Philosophical Issues in Painting and Sculpture", Jacob Jari, hinted of the students degree of

awareness concerning issues of cultural representation and exhibition, "I bring this up in many of my classes, but do not know to what extent other lecturers are making the same efforts with their students". In fact, as regards to the teaching of curation and related fields of study, the majority of art lecturers, and three of the five current heads of departments of fine arts, stated that this was left to the individual lecturers' own discretion.

This "individual" interest is demonstrated in the efforts of various art lecturers to assist students in the organisation of end of year shows[66]. Although only one of the departments of fine arts visited has a fully functional gallery space, that of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, all departments do hold exhibitions of graduating art students works. The motivation of art students in the field of curation has been developed further by some lecturers, like Ayo Adewunmi, at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, who have encouraged a documentation of curatorial projects. This is exemplified in the work of a former art student, Ngozi Onoka, who, in the absence of a gallery at the institute, produced a catalogue in order to document the art works produced in the department. The art lecturers, however, unanimously agreed that art students currently studying in Nigeria knew very little about critical issues concerning the presentation and reception of non-Western art works.

Despite earlier claims that the skills and qualities of an artist were the only prerequisite for embarking on a curatorial project, most art lecturers identified the area of "Art History" when asked about courses with content relevant to curation. For instance, Simeon Athekamhe said: "Art history discusses some issues pertaining to curation". This suggests that, in fact, a deeper understanding of the history of art is required by an artist when organising an exhibition. Art history is not offered as a first degree at any university in Nigeria, other than Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, but is offered at Masters and Ph.D levels in most departments of fine art across the country.

4.1.2 Relevance of Art History Course Content to Curation

From an analysis of the course content of art history classes at the post-graduate level, whether "traditional" or "modern", the study of African art remains strongly influenced by the anthropological origins of the discipline. For example, modern art history courses in Nigeria today still largely concentrate on origins, styles and schools of art, much in the same way as anthropologists have examined the traditional art practice of non-Western cultures. The same post graduate programmes also indicated no direct engagement in the growing debate concerning this anthropological bias, and the exclusion of modern African art by African artists [as opposed to that appropriated by Western artists] from the so-called "universal" history of art, as was constructed in the West during the colonial era. For example, artist and art historian Olu Oguibe (1999), in a discussion in which the author explores the concept of 'negotiated identities', contends that: "The contest for History is central to the struggle for a redefinition and eventual decimation of centrism and its engendering discourse"[67]. And again in reference to the Western canon by which the prevalent art history is maintained, although the art historian Steve Edwards (1999) does not advocate an abandonment, displacement or restructuring of the canon, he proposes that: ". . . it is important and productive to work against the canon's closures, silences, and priorities"[68]. The suggestion is that a critical awareness of, and engagement with the canon be promoted, this advice seems especially pertinent to those persistently excluded from [Western] art history. As the outspoken cynic of the Western canon of art, Rasheed Araeen (1989) argues: "It is not a question of accepting or rejecting the white culture's notion of quality in favour of some mythical black aesthetic, but of engaging and questioning the dominant artistic practice"[69].

The only directly critical courses found amongst those required for a master degree in art history in the higher institutions of art visited was "Art Criticism", taught at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and "Problems in African Art History", University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This insufficiency with regards to directly critical courses was supported by Okay Ikenegbu of the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu,

who asserted that: “Art history [in Nigeria] does not cover contemporary issues and debates”.

A positive challenge to the discipline in the Nigerian context has, nevertheless, been made by the lecturer of art history at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ola Oloidi, in the conception of the “Art Historical Association of Nigeria” in 2001. Oloidi acknowledges the disciplines anthropological basis in a press briefing given at the University of Lagos, August 2001, in which he argued:

> . . . l find it very expedient to reecho my anti septic attitude and prescriptive reaction to the present “state”, teaching, study and conception of art historical studies in Nigeria [. . .] the study and articulation of, particularly, modern Nigerian art history have been made captive to anthropology; thereby inuring art history to professionally unrealistic, un-art historical anthropological excesses[70].

In a further release to the Nigerian press Professor Oloidi outlined the objectives of the association, which included the items: “to create a forum for intellectual encounters; to deflate the prevailing authoritarian, preponderant influences of anthropology in the study and articulation of modern Nigerian art history; and to produce literature that will realistically be a living history and not anthropology of modern Nigerian art”.

If, as Oloidi contests and course content analysis validates, little challenge has been made to the anthropological origins of art history in Nigeria. Does this not, again make the argument proffered against the suitability of anthropologists and art historians in the West curating non-Western art works invalid? If little difference can be seen in the teaching of art history in Nigeria and that of the West some fifteen years ago, before the introduction of more critical and specialist courses, then it could be argued that Nigerian graduates of art history are infact less well-informed of critical issues concerning curation on the international scale than their counterparts in Western institutes of higher education. At the seminar “Naming a Practice: Curatorial

Strategies for the Future", held at the Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada, in November 1994, for instance, the relevance of art history to exhibitionary practice, whatever the bias, was refuted. As Nicodemus (1995) notes:

> There was [. . .] a consensus that the role of the curator has shifted from an historical one, mostly based on art history, conservation, and connoisseurship, to a contemporary one, which involves critical and theoretical thinking, writing skills, fundraising, and marketing - all activities that need to be developed in Africa[71].

Despite such attestations, it would seem irresponsible to disregard the importance of art history in the development of exhibition themes, and the selection of works, when so many of today's exhibitions are still historically led.

However, in response to the question of academic qualifications, an art lecturer from the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, sculptor Okay Ikengegbu, made the leading comment that he felt equipped to curate on the national level. This implies that the demands of a national exhibition are distinct from those met by the organisers of international exhibitions of contemporary African art works. This issue of national versus international was raised by three other lecturers, including Imonikebe, who said that: "Students are not aware of the politics of cultural representation, as the emphasis of art courses here at the University of Benin is on the local environment". The general focus of courses in Nigeria seems to be on the knowledge of indigenous art, as opposed to global issues of art and culture, perhaps due to the relative infancy of exhibition in Nigeria, and the rare opportunity to curate beyond the national level. Do any inadequacies found in the study of art history and art theory in Nigeria, necessarily negate the advantage of a germane knowledge of local art? A knowledge that can be acquired in existing art and art history courses, and also from the appreciation of, and involvement in current art practice in the local environment.

One of the strongest arguments for indigenous curators, regardless of specific curatorial qualification, has been made in reference to the advantage of such a germane knowledge of local art, in regards to both history and current trends. In addition to the art and culture critics McEvilley (1992), Njami (1999) and Appiah (1997), John Picton (1993) is also a vocal advocate for local knowledge, over an acquired knowledge of the "other" in response to his belief that a curator's judgments are a consequence of the aesthetic values and tastes of his, or her own cultural mores. Picton emphasises that this knowledge must evolve together with a greater criticality of local aesthetics and personal tastes.

Notwithstanding the possible advantages of an indepth knowledge of African [or Nigerian] art practice, in recognition of both Oloidi's concerns over the teaching of art history, and Picton's last comment with regards to a criticality of local tastes and values, all art lecturers agreed that in light of the growth of national and international interest in African art, and the subsequent emergence of debates concerning the representation of African art works outside of the continent, that course curricula were insufficient and outdated. With respects to course curricula, comments included: "No, more specialist courses are needed, the curriculum has not been reviewed in years, and is no longer relevant to changing needs" (Adewunmi); "New courses need to be introduced, art history especially needs revision, that is, approaches to art history" (Oloidi); "Certainly not! I would like to see a specific course developed to give more significance to the field" (Buhari) and simply "Seriously deficient!" (Omoighe). These comments certainly reflect the course curricula examined, as few references with specific regards to curation were made overall. Any changes that may have occurred internally to course content were not specified in the curriculum data. Heads of departments of fine arts were generally more cautious in their comments. Although they agreed that more specific courses in curation were important, they seemed concerned that the introduction of such courses should not be detrimental to already "overburdened" curricula. It was only Uhunmwagho, the head of the department of

fine arts, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, who conceded that, despite the present saturation of course curricula, such a course could perhaps be taught at the post graduate level. Uhunmwagho justified this position by suggesting that improperly curated exhibitions were the "undoing" of artists.

In support of the general consensus that current courses are insufficient in the area of curation, in the exhibition catalogue for the 3rd Biennale of the Pan-African Circle of Artists (PACA), the co-curators, Chike Aniakor and Krydz Ikwuemesi[72], refer to the now common argument initiated by Said (1978, 1993), that the West has maintained a position of power globally by the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes in centres of learning. The curators continue to argue, like Oloidi, that the exclusive construct of Western art history, has to date been unchallenged by art scholarship in Nigeria. One such challenge to Western art history could be made, as the art historian Ikem Stanley Okoy (1996), of the University of Chicago, contests with reference to an instillation of Schnapps bottles photographed in Oka, Nigeria, 1910, in a recognition that modern sculpture was being invented in West Africa circa 1890.

Aniakor and Ikwuemesi (2000), again like Oloidi, outline a course of positive action to reverse such elitist constructs, suggesting in relation to education in Africa:

> There is an urgent need to deconstruct Western interpretive techniques of modern art scholarship in the search for emergent scholarly tools that may hasten a more ample distillation of African reality as prefigured in contemporary African art ... The dissemination of modern art from Africa in the West requires the growth of an internally generated scholarship, rigorous in its techniques of interpretation as it is in its conceptual paradigms. A process of Africanisation of our scholarly tool kit is a sine qua non [73].

Some lecturers also elaborated this suggested course of action, such as Buhari, who urged that specific courses would give more significance to the field, and Ikenegbu who went on to assert that students need to be reeducated over the importance, function, and power of exhibition. Nine of the eleven art lecturers

interviewed made a direct reference to the need for a review of course curricula in their department's, this was reiterated by five of the six departmental heads. Although the majority of lecturers argued for more theoretical courses to be introduced, only Oloidi, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Uhunmwagho, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, made mention of a need to revive or establish university and college art galleries for practical courses in the organisation of exhibitions. These last comments should not be overlooked.

The dominant views of today's art critics and theorists seem to be reflected in the concerns of two thirds of the art lecturers and curators [working in Nigeria] interviewed. These views and concerns are aptly summarised in the suggestion made by Nzegwu (2000) for the ideal organisation of an exhibition: ". . . detailed theoretical issues that are germane to both global art and local art, familiarity with local artistic movements and their political concerns, and an informed appreciation of the aesthetic space"[74].

4.2 Experience and Curation in Nigeria

It was established in "4.1 Education and Curation in Nigeria" that those organising exhibitions in Nigeria were not formally, or professionally trained specifically in the field of curation. However, many argued that they had acquired relevant knowledge during their training as artists and art historians, and this was supported by the view that an indepth and germane knowledge of local art, was one of the defining qualities of a curator. More specific qualifications and new approaches to the art discipline [in light of the current debates of misrepresentation of non-Western art] were not disregarded by the respondents, but were rather seen as necessary for the more appropriate recognition of African art globally. Is the experience of Nigerian curators working nationally sufficient and appropriate to these current debates?

From the two sample populations consisting of six curators, and eleven art lecturers [with a consistent curatorial experience], none entered into curation as an intentioned career choice. The majority referred to their first exposure to the organisation of an exhibition as "unintentional" or "incidental". The circumstances given for exposure to curation included: an invitation by a foreign institute, such as the Alliance Francais or the British Council; membership to a national association of artists; and university inspired art shows. Of these circumstances, university inspired shows, especially end of year shows for painting and sculpture students, were given as the first involvement in curation by ten of the seventeen respondents. As Filani says: "Really in response to university programmes at the time of graduation, l felt the need to learn about exhibiting for the end of year show". This implies that more attention to curation and related studies in departments of fine art would be appropriate, allowing for a greater professionality in university shows, exposing artists to the practicalities and the politics of curating an exhibition: A point of reference for future curatorial projects.

The average number of exhibitions, organised by the two sample groups of curators, ranged from two to four exhibitions each year, which were usually limited to national locations. For example, the art lecturer and curator, Mike Omoighe, has consistently curated or co-curated, between two and three exhibitions each year over the last twenty years[75]. Only three of the curators interviewed had worked on international projects, two of who were employed in the capacity of selection committee members, rather than with full curatorial powers. These are: Ola Oloidi, El Anatsui and Jacob Jari. The reason behind this lack of exposure to the international exhibitionary circuit, was unanimously accounted for as a direct result of the scarcity of invitations received from the organisers or sponsors of art events in the West. A variety of speculations were made with regards to this situation, including: A lack of awareness or interest on the part of Western sponsors to exhibitions taking place in Nigeria; limited funds; and a closed network of both Western and recognised African

curators now living and working in the West. No reference was made to the possibility that the experience of a curator working nationally may be inadequate or inappropriate to the requirements of an international project.

It has been established through an examination of a sample of curriculum vitae, and life story questioning, that curators in Nigeria have worked consistently on national projects during the past ten to twenty years. However, if this experience is unique to distinct demands of the national exhibition [as was suggested by Okay Ikenegbu], then what are the specific qualities, good and bad, of a national exhibition? And how relevant is this experience to the demands of an international show?

The location of an exhibition, and its proposed [immediate] audience, their interests, needs, and perspectives, were unanimously given as the most influential determinants for the theme of an exhibition and the subsequent selection of artists and art works. The curators Ikenegbu, Imonikebe, Filani, Buhari, and Ikwuemesi referred to the significance of "dialogue"; the importance of the way in which an exhibition's theme and content relate to, and is interpreted by the local audience. As Filani expressed: "The content of an exhibition must be meaningful nationally, themes should be localised for the local audience, they should communicate understanding". The relationship between the local environment, the local cultural mores, and the intellectual capacity of an audience were all indicated as crucial to the development of an exhibition. For instance, Ikwuemesi, explained that "nudity" would be unacceptable to certain audiences in Nigeria and therefore, may not be considered as a suitable theme[76]. The only curator to contradict this view, was the artist Anatsui, who took a less cautious approach, proposing that it was the curator who should take a leadership role, and "provoke, educate, and broaden the outlook of the audience' [and that] the objectives of an exhibition should be to agitate the publics taste".

The concept of a "local" criteria of taste, value judgment, or aesthetic, as has been put forward in arguments for the inclusion of more African curators in the curation of African centred shows, by scholars such as Picton (1993) and McEvilley (1992), was rejected by Ikwuemesi, who viewed his own selection of art works as a conscious, and intellectually informed procedure that related to the locality of the proposed event. The local audience, and the environment in which they are living, was a consistent term of reference for most of the curators. Notwithstanding Ikwuemesi's objection to a "local", or "indigenous", criteria of value, fourteen of the seventeen curators said that their identity as Nigerians [who, it is assumed understand the nuances of the various cultures of Nigeria], and as Africans, did affect their criteria for the selection of art works.

Whether local aesthetics, or values of taste, are unconscious determinants for the selection of art works or not, it can be concluded that the experience of the Nigerian curator, as is determined by location and audience, is clearly defined by the local environment and cultural mores. This is reiterated in reference to the African artist, by the artist and critic Salah Hassan (1995) who maintains that aesthetics are an issue of locality, and that it is the nature of this locality that dictates the way in which ideas and influences are absorbed.

Due to the preference for group rather than solo exhibitions, themed exhibitions shows have evolved over the last decade, that require a greater attention be paid by the curator to the concept behind an exhibition, and its documentation by means of labelling and the production of art historical documentation in the form of a comprehensive catalogue. Nigerian curators today do show a fare degree of local knowledge of art and culture, as is confirmed in the themes of exhibition catalogues collected, for instance: "Folklore Exhibition", "Our Environment", and "Benin City Art"[77]. And certainly, from the thirty-four catalogues examined, those produced after 1990 demonstrated an increasing quality in the documentation of local art. The depth

of knowledge with regards to Nigerian art is again displayed in the amount of published articles [largely pertaining to Yoruba and Igbo art] written by curators, such as Kunle Filani who writes widely on aspects of Yoruba and Igbo art. For example, "Articulating Yoruba Oral Philosophical System in Understanding Yoruba Aesthetics" and "Contemporary Ulism: A Modern Extension of Traditional Igbo Creativity"[78]. As Simon Ikpakronyi reflects: "Today, exhibitions of art works are packaged with required statements accompanying them, sending good messages to the general public".

However, apart from those exhibitions curated by Krydz Ikwuemesi and associate members of the art association PACA[79], none of the exhibition catalogues submitted indicated any interest in, or knowledge of global issues of art and culture on the part of the organisers. This lack of involvement in current debates, such as the representation and the status of the African artist, does nothing to challenge or educate the artist and art audience nationally. Furthermore, it can incapacitate even the most conversant national curator when working on international projects. Today these projects are undoubtedly an "identity" minefield in which concepts are critically scrutinised, and must be defended in direct relation to specific issues concerning debates of representation in particular. Much of the international audience come to an exhibition with over a centuries worth of assumptions concerning African art, if these are not recognised, and addressed with an informed professionality by the curator, then the exhibition will fail to present a different, more honest view of African art. In specific reference to the transferal of the exhibition "Accident & Design" from a national to an international audience, the co-curator Jacob Jari explained that it is when working internationally that identity becomes a real issue in curatorial practice.

However, Jari went on to contend that a "good" national curator, with the advantage of local knowledge, is able to present Nigerian artists to international audiences more honestly. This last point was reiterated in statements made by many of

the Nigerian curators working on the national level, who felt that national curators had a much better knowledge of art trends in Nigeria, and therefore, give an indepth and honest representation of Nigerian artists and their art works. This view is vigorously defended by the internationally recognised artist and curator, Olu Oguibe, who argues that: "provenance is a relevant element of a curator's make-up, allowing for a better understanding between artist and curator"[80].

Unfortunately, again criticisms concerning the subjectivity of artists as curators, whatever their nationality [as was evident in Chika Okeke's preference for the art style developed at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, when presenting the "Nigerian Story" in the exhibition "Seven Stories"] must also be acknowledged in any argument concerning the eligibility of indigenous "curators" in the organisation of international shows of African art. As was demonstrated earlier in the section "4.1 Education and Curation in Nigeria" those organising exhibitions in Nigeria today are largely artists with no specific curatorial qualifications. This may explain the preference of Nigerian curators for academically trained artists, despite the vibrant history of artist workshops in Nigeria, and a tendency towards selecting already established, known artists.

Although the experience of a national curator does offer indepth knowledge, in the majority of cases the national exhibition does not exert the same demands as an international exhibition in reference to critical issues of art and culture. Like many of the curators interviewed, Krydz Ikwuemesi, complained that exposure to international issues was limited due to a lack of invitations being made by art museums and sponsors in the West. This criticism was followed by the suggestion that with an increase in local patronage, international exhibitions and seminars could in fact be located within Nigeria; like the various biennials that have emerged in the last ten years in Dakar, Senegal, and Johannesburg.

Evidence of adequate patronage as would be required for the initiation of such ambitious projects, was not found in an examination of sponsorship and funding bodies within Nigeria over the last two decades. Four sources of funding were specified by the respondents: the individual, the national association, the foreign institute, and the government. Only two of the fifteen curators, Simon Ikpakronyi and Simeon Athekamhe, mentioned the Federal Government of Nigeria as a source of funding. The government was consistently accused of overlooking the visual arts when allocating funds. However, an examination of "acknowledgements" in the thirty-four sample catalogues collected from national interviewees[81] showed that the Nigerian government, largely through the parastatal, National Gallery of Art, was sited more than any other single patron (It should be noted that university organised shows comprise one third of the category for government funding, these shows, although indirectly funded by the government, are however more likely to be the financial responsibility of the individual lecturers involved). In the acknowledgement for the exhibition of Otu Ewena artists, "Man & Society", curated by Mike Omoighe in 2001, it is stated that:

> An Exhibition of this magnitude could not have been successful without the support of the National Gallery of Art (N.G.A). It is important to note that the National Gallery, under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Paul Dike, did more than just render financial support for the Exhibition, the N.G.A also initiated this historic collaboration with the Otu Ewena, in its desire to promote growth in art[82].

However, officials employed by the Ministry of Arts and Culture were, nevertheless, still held responsible by two of the respondents for the inappropriate allocation of funds when awarded, saying that employees were generally not art professionals and, therefore, had little or no awareness of the predicament of art and art scholarship in the country. As the sculptor, Tonie Okpe, asserted in June, 1995:

> It has become obvious that the various government organs of culture together with private and seemingly purely business oriented galleries and museums in Nigeria are proving to be unable to cope with the desires and demands of the new reasoning to invest in perpetuating the development of experimental aspects of art[83].

If the government is guilty of under-funding the arts, the cause may derive, in part, from a decrease in national art society [or association] activities, ever since the initial stimulation brought about by independence, and the drive for the creation of a new national identity. As during the early post-colonial years artists belonging to, for instance, the Society for Nigerian Artists (SNA), played a strategic role in relation to the development of government policy and the visual arts. The artists Fasuyi and Grillo, were both formerly influential members of the SNA, as well as advisors to the Federal Government of Nigeria on matters of arts and culture. In fact, Fasuyi was responsible for the creation of the Nigerian Cultural Policy in 1973, and likewise Grillo, as the then president of the SNA, in 1980 presented the society's suggestions on the development of a national gallery, the National Gallery of Art, Lagos[84].

The history of one of the most influential associations of art, the SNA, does seem to demonstrate a decrease in the organisation of exhibitions by national art associations. The association developed out of the Zaria Art Society[85], a society initiated by art students at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1958, which during the three years of its existence assisted in the organisation of many exhibitions, including the significant exhibitions: "Independence Art Exhibition", 1960, and "FESTAC", 1977. When the SNA was formally established in 1964, it began to organise annual exhibitions. The association was also central to the establishment of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Lagos, in 1981, which became known as the National Gallery, Lagos, in 1993. Criticisms made by art historian, Ola Oloidi, that the association has been in decline during recent years, and members have become apathetic towards its once vibrant exhibition programmes, is evident in the absence of regular large scale SNA art exhibitions. In the exhibition catalogue "Man And Society"

Simon Ikpakronyi[86] gives a detailed account of the development and decline of art associations in Nigeria, and suggests that the current decline is associated with the opinion popular amongst association membership that the purpose of an exhibition is financial reward. With regards to such criticisms, at the general meeting of the Lagos chapter of the SNA, held in March 2003 at the National Gallery of Art, Lagos, the newly elected president, Olu Ajayi, announced plans for the creation of programmes to enable for wider exhibition of studio artists presently working in Nigeria.

A reduction in funding by foreign institutes and national art associations was further criticised by interviewees. Certainly catalogue acknowledgements, from 1985-2003, confirmed that during this period few exhibitions in Nigeria were sponsored by either bodies, although the decline in patronage referred to was not identified over the eighteen year period covered by the catalogue documentation. Foreign institutes, when mentioned, usually provided exhibition space rather than financial assistance. In an informal interview with the former director for arts at the British Council, Abuja, David Roberts[87], a possible cause for a "decline" in arts funding by this particular institute was given. According to Roberts the British Council, which was established in Lagos in 1936, was formerly an active supporter of the arts in Nigeria throughout the 1960's and 1990's, giving funds and venues for exhibitions of art. However, Roberts continued that the council has recently redirected its funds from arts projects to educational development. Notwithstanding, Lagos based cultural centres, notably the Alliance Francais and the Goethe Institut do continue to be significant patrons of contemporary African, and Nigerian artists. As is demonstrated in the large scale international conference, "Under Seige: Four African Cities, Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos", that was hosted by the Goethe Institut, between March 15-20, 2003, as a critical stage of the development of the art event Documenta II, held every five years at Europe's oldest public museum, the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany. In a celebration of the contribution made to the development of contemporary Nigerian art by the former deputy director of the Goethe Institut,

Renate Albertsen-Marton, [who worked at the institut between 1988 and 1995], Tonie Okpe (1995) says that: "The participation of the Goethe-Institut in Nigeria in the support, promotion and patronage of the development of contemporary Nigerian art through exhibitions, symposiums, lectures, workshops and publications is immense"[88].

In response to the criticisms made by other artist-curators concerning a decrease in funding, Jacob Jari reproached those responsible for the organisation of exhibitions, inferring that they did not recognise, and subsequently did not approach, the full spectrum of potential sponsors within and without of Nigeria. However, the catalogues studied do indicate a greater diversity in sponsorship, especially from the private sector in the last ten years, for instance the 3rd Harmattan workshop and exhibition "Art and Environment", held in Agbarha Otor, 2000, funding came from a diverse group of sponsors, including: National Gallery of Art; Ford Foundation; Asea Brown Boveri Ltd; Xerox H.S (Nigeria) Ltd; Nestle Nigeria plc; Cadbury Nigeria plc; Nigerian Breweries and the organising body itself the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation. It does seem that some curators are starting to source funding more often from private companies and individuals in recent years. Included amongst individual sponsors are also a growing number of directors of private galleries, including "Nimbus Art Gallery", "Didi Museum" and "Signature Gallery" (Lagos)[89], all of which have assisted in funding or hosting exhibitions in recent years, and have moved beyond the parameters of profit-making and the promotion of particular groups of artists, such as the AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artists who exhibit annually at the Bona Gallery, Enugu, enabling individual curators the opportunity to communicate art historical ideas to the public. However, the art administrator, and curator, Ekpo Udoma, argues that more needs to be done, saying that African society, and individual sponsors [such as the directors of private art galleries] in particular, must 'focus more attention on conceptual work as opposed to the current situation whereby more emphasis is being placed on sales of art'. The curator of exhibitions for PACA, Krydz Ikwuemesi, also

made reference to fundraising events undertaken by the group as an alternative means of funding projects.

Although a considerable decline in funding from public sector patronage is difficult to establish from catalogues alone, the views of the respondents concerning their experiences must be taken into consideration. If not a reduction in funding, certainly evidence shows that the allocation of funds is often limited to certain institutions or individuals. For instance, it was found that government sponsorship is largely consigned to exhibitions held at the National Gallery of Art, Lagos. Many of these exhibitions are subsequently under the guidance of those curators who are employed by the Gallery. It was also noted that foreign institutes based in Lagos generally concentrate their funding on art associations and individuals based in the south and south-east, such as PACA.

Any decline in funding, or the allocation of funds to certain groups and individuals will have contributed to the amount of exhibitions organised, and who has the opportunity to curate, but may also have implications concerning the quality of national exhibitions produced over the last decade. In the opinion of one artist and curator, Jerry Buhari, curation in Nigeria is today a “gorilla curation”. Most curators agreed that standards had suffered along with a general decline in scholarship and funding, giving more specific consequences of poor funding as: restricting selection to local known artists, compromising themes, inferior venues, and insufficient publicity and documentation of exhibitions. For example on a practical note, Jari compares national and international projects: “There is an absolute difference in professionality, such as packing for instance, here there is such a lack of care over works, also there is less respect for works, for instance in the U.K even wall spaces are carefully measured, also lighting is well thought out and labelling is well informed, this does not occur here”. And as regards to themes Udoma explains: “I think part of the problem relates to the function which contemporary art plays in the African society. Here emphasis is

placed on more financial benefits, as opposed to concepts and the dissemination of ideas".

Mike Omoighe disclosed that as a consequence of these financial restrictions national curators are often reluctant to take on shows where poor funding may inhibit the organisation of a quality production. Omoighe continued, explaining that the elevation of the curator in Nigeria during recent years, has led to a more rigorous criticism of exhibitions, resulting in an increased responsibility being placed on curators. This responsibility may deter some curators from taking on the curation of certain exhibitions. This is revealed in the informative arts pages found in many of Nigeria's daily newspapers, such as "The Guardian". In a discussion of the relationship between the audience and producers of an exhibition, Elaine Gurian[90] speaks about the greater inclusion felt by an audience in exhibitions where the creator, or curator, is identified, and is therefore held accountable by the public, as well as the critic, for the individual point of view displayed.

Yet this negative development could prove to be the incentive needed for a greater professionalism in those projects that are accepted in the future. For instance, one possible outcome may be that an increased responsibility leads to the emergence of a core of curators, who will take on the majority of national projects, and therefore be able to source funding from regular sponsors, and provide quality shows. A new generation of curators are already making a name in the profession, and encouraging impressive changes in the field of curation in Nigeria. One such new talent, is the artist Krydz Ikwuemesi, who, although modest about his achievements, has been successful in soliciting new sponsors, and thus enabling the development of quality international shows and seminars in Nigeria. For example in 2002, Ikwuemesi was integral to the organisation of PACA's biggest project, the "Pan-African Conference on the Status, Role and Working Condition of the Artist in Africa", Enugu, for which he accessed international funds of over $22,000, as well as substantial national

support. Furthermore, over nine countries were represented at the conference, with contributions by such well-acknowledged scholars as John Picton, Yukiya Kawaguchi and Everlyn Nicodemus. Ikwuemesi in recent years has also become an advocate for critical art scholarship in institutions of higher education throughout the country.

Despite the restrictions of exhibition in Nigeria that were vocalised by national curators, evidence of an increased quality in larger, better funded projects is revealed in related publications, such as exhibition catalogues. Certainly the field of curation has moved away from the selection committees of the 1960's, to individual curators with increased responsibilities.

4.3 Nigerian Curators in the West

All but one of the expatriate curators questioned, Olu Oguibe, were found to have begun to curate in Nigeria before their emigration to the West; primarily the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Sylvestor Ogbechie informed that he had curated in Nigeria from 1987 to 1993. Like the interviewees living and working within Nigeria, these curators too referred to University based shows as their first exposure to the organisation of exhibitions of contemporary African art. For example, Ogbechie specified his pioneer show as the "Third Nsukka Workshop", University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Although none of the respondents expressed any difficulty in entering into the exhibition of contemporary African art internationally, neither did they refer to their emigration as instigated by an invitation to curate. It seems that, again, entrance into curation internationally was incidental to other motivations, such as post-graduate study or employment at institutions of art.

Ultimately in answer to the question of qualification and experience discussed earlier in this chapter, twelve of the sixteen art lecturers and curators working in Nigeria granted that indeed there was a lack of adequately qualified curators within Nigeria. The same respondents went on to unanimously agree that this was a possible

cause of the predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. Expatriate curators, were negatively viewed by the majority of national art lecturers and curators, who accused them of misrepresentation, a criticism usually reserved for their Western counterparts. Some interviewees went on to give a further explanation for this misrepresentation of African art, for instance Ikwuemesi, Ikenegbu, and Imonikebe all referred to economic incentive, proffered by Western patrons with often questionable agendas, as a major concern. Ikwuemesi stated that: "[expatriate curators] deem to be representatives of Africa only in order to gain grants etcetera. They have failed to put records straight", likewise Ikenegbu charged expatriate curators of being: ". . . concerned with economics alone, they do not paint a good picture of what is happening in Nigeria, its a bit like who pays the piper, they say what the "other" wants them to". This argument was reflected again in responses to the question of the elevation of African artists from purely African centred shows to mainstream exhibitions, with the majority of respondents in Nigeria agreeing that expatriate curators have failed to bring Nigerian artists to the fore, and rather they concentrate their efforts on a clique of African artists in the Diaspora. These views were powerfully vocalised by participants of the National Symposium celebrating 40 years of the Zaria Art Society held at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in November 1998. Audience members were reported[91] to have reacted loudly to a claim made by Jerry Buhari that: "We are claiming the centre through Okwui Enwezor's feet and we all should celebrate it". Individuals [again reportedly] claimed the curator [Enwezor] "despised the great works going on at home" and with regards to his position as curatorial director of the mega-exhibition Documenta XI, Kasel, Germany, "doesn't see it as his opportunity to lift the art of Nigeria to the attention of the global market".

The expatriate curators, Sylvestor Ogbechie and Olu Oguibe, acknowledged in part the opinions of the art lecturers and curators in Nigeria, the former contending that:

> Expatriate curators now focus mainly on African artists who live and work in the West. We may contest their choices and discursive orientation but we also have to be aware that their location as expatriate critics implicates them in the power relations they have with those who fund their curatorial practice (museums etc).These fund providers dictate what is presented in their name and use their power as patrons to redirect attention away from Africa[92].

In line with this explanation, Oguibe alludes to the "difficult circumstances" African expatriate curators work under, and further concedes that: "Sometimes a curator is no more than an impresario, a horse-trader, or a window dresser, and each of these contexts or circumstances decide what taste or set of values they honour".

These explanations seem to validate the accusation of the national artists and curators that infact a degree of misrepresentation [or no representation at all] does take place at the hands of both Western and non-Western curators, although the onus is placed with the art patron and not the curator. As Okeke pointed out, despite the growing number of African curators working internationally, prior to the forthcoming exhibition of works by the Ghanaian artist, El Anatsui, to be held at the National Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institute, United States of America, scheduled for 2004, few African artists have had a solo exhibition in the West. A notable exception is the expatriate Nigerian artist, Sokari Douglas Camp, who has had various solo exhibitions in the United Kingdom, including "Alali" (Festival Time), held at both the October Gallery, London, and the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1985. The artist's work was also displayed as part of the africa95 season of arts, at the British Museum, London, in an exhibition entitled "Play and Display: Steel Masquerades from Top to Toe".

Notwithstanding criticisms of misrepresentation by expatriate Nigerian curators, and their various funders, exhibitions curated, whether African-centred in theme or global, reveal that a significant number of African artists were included. For instance, in the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale[93], directed by Okwui Enwezor, over one third of participating artists had Afro-Carribean origins. The majority of these artists were

found to be living and working in the Diaspora, such as Yinka Shonibare, Olu Oguibe, and Oladele Bamgboye, all of who were identified as Nigerian.

The most powerful argument made by the expatriate curators related to location and the prospective audience of an exhibition. All of the respondents referred to the significance of location to considerations such as the content and display of a particular exhibition. Okeke first made a basic distinction between the expected audience of a national and an international show, explaining that a "home" audience is more likely to be sympathetic to the ideas, issues and subjects that the show is communicating, whereas foreign audiences are often "completely dumb" or "overly patronising" to the same ideas, issues and subjects. The artist and curator then illustrated this explanation with the scenario of taking the national exhibition "Zaria Art Society: A New Consciousness" to the U.S or Europe, concluding that the curator's perspective would have to be more global than local in order that it be appealing to non-Nigerian scholarship or spectatorship. This position was reflected in the statement made by Ogbechie that: "International exhibitions on the other hand, removed attention from local African issues and judge African artists by the standards of local issues in places like New York or London". This is reflected in the work of the international curator, Okwui Enwezor. For example, under Enwezor's direction, the concept of the 2nd Johannesburg Bienniale (1997) was "Trade Routes: History and Geography", which examined nationalism and globalisation.

It seems, therefore, that just as Nigerian curators who work nationally accredited their location for their choices over selection of art works and themes, rather than any so-called African [or black] aesthetic, so too expatriate curators must be influenced by their new locations in the Diaspora where identities take up broader affiliations. This combination of influences is reflected in Bisi Silva's statement that: "As someone who has lived and studied in Europe but travelled widely l would say that my values and tastes are internationalist but heavily influenced by my African and European

heritage". As the Nsukka based artist, El Anatsui, said of his selection criteria and aesthetic values: "You can't rule out location, consciously, unconsciously or subconsciously".

Oguibe goes further to absolve expatriate curators of any obligation to represent African art, arguing that: ". . . we would all benefit more were everything to devolve to the level of the artist and what it is they are contending with in their work irrespective of where their parents were born". This is a very valid point, and may well prove to be the best way forward for artists who, it must be said, in spite of their location are not immune to global influences. However, at present it seems a utopian projection, when exhibitions of the "African" type are sometimes an artist's only opportunity to be exhibited, and when infrastructures in Africa for the promotion and development of African artists may not be sufficient to attract national, much less international, attention.

If there is any obligation at all, Oguibe goes on to argue that it is "Artists and curators living and working in Africa [who] have a responsibility, if they choose, to work mutually toward promoting cultural production where it matters most, which is in their respective locales". This view is reiterated by the national curator, Ikwuemesi, who felt that it was time for Africans to relate their own stories, in order that Africans talk on their own terms and from their own environment. Furthermore, Ikwuemesi went on to specify Africans living and working in Africa as the rightful representatives of African art. However, as Ikwuemesi continued: "With a lack of exhibition materials, for instance catalogues, the whole exhibitionary practice in Nigeria seems like a fairy tale!" The importance of a good exhibitionary infrastructure was referred to by Ogbechie who contrasted the rise of "popular" African art that owes much to its open market merchandising, with the poor patronage of academic art, that he claims "falls through the cracks because its habitus calls for set discourses and protocols of exhibition in gallery spaces". Without this infrastructure the requested interaction

between national Nigerian curators and expatriate and non-African curators and artists may prove difficult to foster. The expatriate, Chika Okeke, illustrated this issue with the exhibition "The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994"[94] with which the artist and curator was involved. Okeke explained:

During the curation of The Short Century, we had plans of travelling the show to at least three African venues. But after fact checking and consultations, the only space that could accommodate the show on the continent was the South African National Gallery (that arrangement fell through eventually due to funding problems). So in the end, the show, regarded by many to be the most important modern African art show, could not be seen in Africa. It was most regrettable, but it highlights the difficulty of curating serious shows on the continent[95].

The National Gallery of Art, Lagos, was specifically criticised by Okeke as dysfunctional in providing a much needed depository, research centre and exhibition space for Nigerian art. This opinion of the National Gallery was supported by the Zaria based art lecturer, Jacob Jari, who said: "The National Gallery of Art must be better organised, now it is still dealing with money pulling names alone". Like other galleries located in Nigeria, Okeke inferred that it is an institution without a well-fitted gallery space, knowledgeable manpower, accessible and comprehensive collections of art works and research materials, or any acceptable insurance premiums.

The curator suggested that along with the establishment of appropriate national institutions of art, that: ". . . there must be independent and affiliated curators to organise shows funded by private and institutional donors WITHIN Nigeria. Such shows could then travel internationally". Ogbechie too said: "The main disadvantage of presenting art exhibitions in Africa is that most African countries are lacking in fundamental resources and thus cannot and do not provide the kinds of resources necessary for producing good art exhibitions". Like the national curators, Ikenegbu

and Imonikebe, Ogbechie went on to reproach governments in Africa for their lack of interest in the arts, saying: ". . . arts are not in the top priority of their aspirations". In conclusion to these criticisms, Okeke asserts: "A nation that depends on shows paid for by foreigners cannot be in a position to argue about how it is represented in these shows".

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of findings. The findings give the basis for the conclusions of the study from which the resultant recommendations have been made concerning further possibilities for research projects, as well as suggestions for educational establishments, galleries and museums within Nigeria, and for the relevant offices of the Federal government of Nigeria. In addition reference is also made to those curators currently practising in the West.

5.1 Summary

All but two of the Nigerian participants of the study declined to be designated as a "curator". It was proposed that this was either a result of educational background or employment status, as those describing themselves as curators were employed full-time as curators of contemporary Nigerian art works. Specific qualifications in curation were not possessed, and the majority of art lecturers and independent curators interviewed referred to their qualifications as artists or art historians when defining themselves professionally. The attributes of an artist were seen by many as adequate qualification for the organisation of exhibitions, however some art lecturers did qualify this pronouncement in that they felt comfortable in organising national shows, but on the international level suggested that a greater professionality and awareness of art critical and theoretical issues be required.

None of the institutes of art visited within Nigeria held specific curatorial studies programmes, in general, course curricula in departments of fine arts concentrated on the practical application of art, such as painting and sculpture. Nevertheless, courses found in these departments did contain some relevant values to the field, such as

"Aesthetics and Philosophical Issues in Painting and Sculpture", a class taught at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The dissemination of current discourse, and even the introduction of such courses in some cases, was a result of the personal efforts of individual lecturers.

Art History was discussed widely as containing material applicable to curation, yet courses were also criticised for being outdated in their approach, which was seen as anthropological. Course outlines did not reveal any acknowledgement of current arguments concerning the bias of Western art history, or secondary debates, such as that of the representation of art and culture in exhibitionary practice.

Nevertheless, the content of art and art history courses, along with a germane knowledge of local art culture was seen by the majority of respondents as providing reasonable information for the organisation of local art shows. Catalogues demonstrated a fair standard of competence with regards to local art practice in Nigeria, however with regards to overall themes and the subsequent selection of art works, curatorial decisions in general were found to be cautious. None of the catalogues exhibited critical themes of art and culture, such as sexuality, or medium, such as installation or video, and various interviewees remarked on the limitations they felt the national exhibition [and local audience], placed upon their curatorial creativity.

Nigerian curators working nationally, when asked about their first exposure to the organisation of exhibitions, said that they entered into curation unintentionally either by the invitation of a foreign cultural institution, such as the Alliance Francais, or as students partaking in the end of year shows organised by most art institutes in Nigeria. Exhibitions, for most of the curators, however, have become a regular exercise, with an average of three to four shows organised each year. Few curators had been given the opportunity to work internationally, and most blamed a lack of awareness on the part of international patrons, and limited personal or locally accessible funds.

Identity was recognised by fourteen of the seventeen curators as affecting their criteria for the selection of art works for a particular show. Also much attention was paid to the effect of location on this selection procedure. The interests, understanding and needs of the audience were given as the determining factors behind theme and ultimate selection decisions.

A decline in funding, by national art associations, foreign institutes and the government, and a decline scholarship in general, were discussed as reasons for a said degeneration in the standards of national art exhibitions. The limitations already mentioned concerning location and audience, along with location and infrastructure and funding were indicated as the main factors behind the "confinement" of Nigerian curators working nationally to shows located in Nigeria, rather than an intentional exclusion by the international art community.

All but one of the expatriate Nigerian curators questioned, started to curate when based in Nigeria, however, emigration to the West was not in response to an invitation to curate. When asked about criteria, none of the international participants referred to a so-called "African" or "Black" aesthetic, although the predominance of afro-centred shows curated by the expatriates exposed a conscious attempt to advocate contemporary African art. Accusations were made by curators based in Nigeria that these international curators do not support artists living in Africa, but instead continue to pander to Western tastes [as are institutionalised in many mainstream Western art museums and galleries] by exhibiting African artists in the Diaspora who, are arguably more in line with current Western art practice. Responses to such accusations varied from the argument that African curators in the West are not obliged to be representative of their culture, or that the exhibition of African art in Western museums is subject to difficult negotiations and compromises between the curator and the patron. And like the nationally based artist-curators of Nigeria, international

curators constantly referred to the impact of location and audience on their choice of theme and artists.

The expatriate curators Ogbechie, Okeke, and Oguibe were of the opinion that the position of the African artist would benefit greatly from an improvement in the African economy, allowing for the development of local patronage, both from the private and public sector. It was felt that an elevation of the national gallery in particular, and other state museums in general, would allow for a greater professionalism in exhibition. The development of an effective infrastructure for the visual arts, including research centres, repositories and galleries, would allow for well-researched, adequately supplied, suitably presented exhibitions, that could then open up the possibility of an exchange of ideas, through the touring of exhibitions and the organisation of international seminars.

5.2 Conclusions

The hypothesis investigated in this study was: An indigenous curator is best informed to curate exhibitions of contemporary art derived from his or her own culture, and therefore should dominate in the organisation of such exhibitions. The basic research questions used in evaluating this hypothesis were: Why are so few curators of Nigerian decent internationally recognised? Whose values and tastes influence the Nigerian curators selection criteria? What is the value of indigenous curators in the organisation of international exhibitions of contemporary African art works? And finally what is being done to encourage a new direction in the reception of African art?

Despite the claim made by Oguibe, in an open letter on the internet in 2000, that a so-called Western exhibitionary circuit may have contributed to a scarcity of African [and non-Western] curators working internationally, this view was compromised by the same artist-curator in this study. In fact, Oguibe, and the majority of the expatriate

curators interviewed attested the existence of a dominant Western art circuit, or any one circuit altogether, and further disputed that a curator of African decent encounters any serious discrimination in his or her appointment as an exhibition organiser. The majority of the expatriate artist-curator population who provided data for this study have however, emerged as curators in the West after additional scholarship at institutes of art based in the West. This seems to indicate that the requirements of exhibitionary practice in the West necessitate a more extensive, or distinct, training or understanding. This could account for the rarity of Nigerian, or African curators working internationally, certainly the examination of course curricula available for this study have shown that courses disseminating a knowledge specifically relevant to the nurturing of professional curators within Nigeria are yet to be developed. To date, no specific courses in curation are available to Nigerian art students. Furthermore, the field of art history, as it is being taught in Nigeria today, retains an anthropological bias that is detrimental to an exploration of issues concerning art and culture.

As far as acquiring adequate experience by means of the regular organisation of exhibitions within Nigeria is concerned, although the exhibition catalogues examined do demonstrate an awareness of Nigerian art [both traditional and modern], with reference to, for instance, certain cultural specifities of symbolism, they do little to educate the viewer on wider issues, such as the effects of globalism on art practice in Nigeria. An engagement with any of the critical issues of art and culture currently being debated in the West is generally absent. Nevertheless, the advantages of a germane knowledge of Nigerian art should not be overlooked, and certainly it is important to acknowledge that many of the Nigerian artist-curators interviewed in this study stressed that their identity as Nigerians, and their location within Nigeria, did affect their selection criteria.

With regards to the practicalities of the practice, such as lighting and labelling, exhibitions located in Nigeria often seem to suffer from a lack of funding on the part of

patrons, both public and private, and/or a professionality on the part of their organisers.

Like their counterparts working largely in the West, those Nigerian curators organising exhibitions nationally within Nigeria also emphasised the expected audience, or location, as the main consideration in the selection of themes and subsequent works of art. Within Nigeria themes were said to be restricted according to their acceptability to the proposed audience, whilst outside of Nigeria the selection of artists was more likely to be limited in relation to the individuals' popularity or their relevance to current artistic trends. It was found that only those Nigerian curators working in the West were further constrained by their immediate patrons, such as the gallery or museum in which a particular exhibition is held.

Although many of the artist-curators based in Nigeria contested that it was the African who was best equipped to represent African art, the transferal of such "curators", who are limited in education and practical experience, to the West where the full complexities of representation come into place, may prove problematic. This was acknowledged in the fact that the majority of nationally active artist-curators were reluctant to be addressed as curators, and that likewise many felt they were equipped to curate on the national level only, (none held specific qualifications in curatorial studies).

Despite the problems stated, Nigerian artist-curators, with their advantage of location, and their awareness of local trends in contemporary Nigerian art, should be more fully engaged in the ongoing reevaluation [and elevation] of contemporary African art both within and without of Africa. This was acknowledged by both those artist-curators working nationally and those expatriate Nigerians largely engaged in the West. Apart from the much call for addition of post-graduate studies specifically related to curation, artist-curators asked that a more sustainable interaction between

curators working in the West and Africa be developed. The artist-curator Chika Okeke, furthered this point by saying that only after national improvements are made within exhibitionary practice, including the professionality of organisers and receptacles of art, can such a movement of creative possibilities be realised. Such a movement should nurture a greater appreciation of African art, in Africa as well as the West.

Clearly, if the current inadequacies of Nigerian curatorial practice are to be overcome, attention must be paid to its development, in order that a populace of indigenous curators be produced, equipped with a comprehensive knowledge that may promote Nigerian artists, and challenge current assumptions pertaining to African art.

5.3 Recommendations

First, with regards to education and curation within Nigeria, current scholarship in the area of art history must be reappraised in order to include current discourse of contemporary African art. The way in which art history is approached in relationship to African art must also take into account ongoing debates of art history, as has been attempted by the inclusion of the course "Problems in African Art History" at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Changes to the discipline should not, however, be at the expense of the knowledge currently available to art history students, but in relationship with, and in addition to it. Certainly, art students in general should be given the opportunity to study issues related to curation and the complexities of exhibition to their practice, although it would be expected that more specialist courses be developed at the post graduate level in line with the demands of art promotion today. The development of galleries within art departments would also assist in the teaching of such courses. The concerns of art lecturers currently in the employ of the major centres of art learning within Nigeria today should be appreciated and discussed further by the appropriate bodies.

Second, contemporary African art has continued to grow in popularity throughout the world since the 1980's, and therefore the Federal Government of Nigeria should acknowledge this fact in the rekindling of past communication with art professionals in Nigeria. The government should be concerned with the promotion of its artists both within and without Nigeria, and therefore must professionalise the way in which repositories of art are managed in order that they offer quality exhibition space, and exhibitions [whether permanent or temporary] and the possibility to encourage encounters between national and internationally recognised curatorial teams. Alternative venues and areas for public art should also be initiated in order to encourage more encounters between the often "gallery-shy" Nigerian public and the art world. Efforts could also be made to reassess the purpose of government outposts in the West, like the cultural institutes of the British and German governments, these could offer foreigners a much needed insight into Nigerian art and culture.

Third, although the Nigerian government is obviously obliged to its state and national galleries and museums, national Nigerian art associations must also take the responsibility of funding regular shows, whether this funding is sourced internally through membership or externally by means of private sector patronage. As the organisers of the association, PACA have proven, both private and public sector patronage can be successfully sourced for funding, and creative means of fundraising may offer an alternative to grants per se.

NOTES

1 This argument was first put forward by professor Edward W Said in *Orientalism: western conceptions of the orient* (1978), and developed by the same author in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). It has since been acknowledged in the work of American anthropologist James Clifford (1988, 1997) *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. They, amongst others believe that during the colonial era, and the expansion of the empire, as new cultures were encountered they became part of a system of unequal power relations which assured their domination.

2 The most productive era for the colonials came between 1815 and 1914 when the colonial territory expanded from approximately 35 per cent of the earth's surface to about 85 per cent of it. See Harry Magdoff (1974) 'Colonialism (1763-c. 1970)' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed, p.893-894. Also Fieldhouse, D (1967) *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* New York: Delacorte Press, p.178.

3 Art critic Thomas McEvilley (1992) *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* p.10, says that the concept of the "other" developed out of Western scientific thought (see Charles Darwins theory of evolution in On the Origin of Species, London, 1859), whereby Western culture was to be the "universal Self: non-Western culture was to be entirely Other". McEvilley goes on to suggest that although both modernism and post-modernism have since challenged this theory, the result, however, remains negative: "Modernism fetishisized sameness, and now post-Modernism fetishizes difference", p.11. This view is supported by many, including Lemke (1998) who speaks in some depth of the relationship between the "primitive" and the "other" in reference to transatlantic modernism.

4 During the 19th century human biology in the West supported the stance of Charles Darwin; that different races developed at different speeds. The colonial domination of peoples of the South was seen to demonstrate the superiority of the colonial powers. The colonised were seen as unchanging or "static" in this cultural evolution, and as "primitive"; a term clarified by Colin Rhodes (1994) in *Primitivism and Modern Art* as "someone or something less complex, or less advanced, than the person or thing to which it is being compared", and as always more "instinctive, less bound by artistic convention and history, and as somehow closer to fundamental aspects of human existence", p.13.

5 Museums of the twentieth century were established upon the collections of artifacts donated by a variety of anthropologists, travellers and colonial administrators. The most prominent museums of the time included: British Museum, London (established 1753); Berlin Museum fur Volkerkunde (established 1886); and the Musee Ethnographique des Missions Scientifiques, Paris (established 1878). For an illustrative history of the development of these museums refer to "The Arrival of Tribal Objects in the West: Africa" by Jean-Louis Paudrat in Rubin, W (ed) (1984) *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, pp.10-13.

6 Clifford, J (1997) *Routes: Travels and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, p.83.

7 The first major art museum exhibition of contemporary African art was African Negro Art (1932) New York, Museum of Modern Art. This exhibition was curated by James Johnson Sweeney with the assistance of Robert Goldwater and the prominent collector of the time, Charles Ratton. Over six hundred pieces of African art were displayed.

8 In relation to visual arts, "modernism" holds a belief in universal principles, such as aesthetics of pure form, by which art is to be appreciated. McEvilley (1992) recognises that modernist internationalism was an "imperial assertion by which non-Western cultures would assimilate to Western mores", p.11.

9 Olu Oguibe contests that one cannot look at art alone - but must look at the attitudes of the Euro/America - often self-serving - in maintaining their dominant position in the art world, as elsewhere, views that inform their artistic interests. He is critical of Euro/America's definitions of who are the interesting artists and its selections of which ones to exhibit, which for Africa, tend to focus on the naive artists, the exotic, the folk-style contemporary artists, rather than more technically skilled artists.

Naive artists, such as the Zairean sack painter Cheri Samba, or the Nigerian sign painter Middle Art have become popular choices for Western exhibitions (both were included in the first travelling exhibition Kunst Aus Afrika in 1979) whereas technically skilled artists (whether trained or untrained) are largely unrecognised in the West. Samba was elevated to the status of international artist by Jean-Hubert Martin in the exhibition Magiciens de la Terre (1989) Pompidou Centre, Paris, before which his work was seen as no different from any other sack painter in his native Zaire.

10 Barker, E (1999) *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, p.13.

11 "Post-Modernism" in the visual arts opposes a universal art in an appreciation of difference, and in doing so actively promotes the art of non-occidental art, womens art, and that of gay and lesbian artists. McEvilley (1992) warns of a post-Modernist paternalism in relation to the exhibition of the art of non-occidental cultures, implying that difference may be fetishized.

Jean-Hubert Martin has been referred to as the first curator to take a post-modernist approach towards the exhibition of non-occidental art (McEvilley, 1992) in Magiciens de la Terre, Paris 1989. This view has been rejected by others, for example the artist and writer Rasheed Araeen, such views will be fully examined in the literature review.

12 See the critique by Hylton, R (1999) 'Global v Local' in *Art Monthly* November-December. Also refer to the exhibitions and accompanying catalogues: Zero, Zero Zero (1999) London, Whitechapel Art Gallery, *Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos, Global Change, East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now* (1997) London, Hayward Gallery.

13 For example: Jean-Hubert Martin (1989) Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Magiciens de la Terre; Susan Vogel (1991) New York, Center for African Art, Africa Explores; Susan Vogel (1998) New York, Center for African Art, Art/Artefact; Susan Vogel (1996) New York, Centre for African Art, African Art in Anthropological Collections. And the africa95 season, including: Tom Philips (1995) London, Royal Academy, Africa: The Art of a Continent; Clementine Deliss/Felicity Lunn (1995) London, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa and Andre Magnin (1995) London, Serpentine Gallery Big City: Artists from Africa.

14 High-profile exhibitions include the categories of biennials and also blockbusters (or mega-exhibitions), for example the biennials of Johannesburg and Venice, and the international blockbuster held every five years in Kassel, Germany, Documenta. These exhibitions have offered huge financial rewards to their organisers and hosts due to the anticipation, and generation of high attendance figures.

15 Littlefield-Kasfir, S (1999)*Contemporary African Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, p.136.

16 Oguibe, O (1993) 'Review of Africa Explores' in *African Arts*, January, pp.16-22.

17 Simon Ottenberg speaks at some length about the increasing art markets and patronage within Nigeria, and informs that approximately 50 per cent of all contemporary Nigerian art works are now sold within the country, to mainly Nigerians rather than expatriates, pp.104-105. This supported in the rise of private galleries within Nigeria since the 1950's, such as the Didi Museum, Ajibulu Moniya Gallery, Signature Gallery in Lagos, and the Bona Gallery, Enugu. In Dike and Oyelola eds (2002) The Development of the National Gallery of Art and The National Studios of Art Ikpakronyi gives a basic history of the growth of galleries within Nigeria.

18 Attention is drawn to the scarcity of internationally active African curators in an open letter on the internet in which Oguibe responds to the reinstatement of Ivo Mesquita as the Chief curator of the 25th Bienal of Sao Paulo. Oguibe's letter centres on the decision of Mesquita not to invite an African curator to curate the African contribution of the event. The correspondence continues, with Oguibe's revelation that of all the international exhibitions held in the year 2000, only two had African curators on their curatorial teams.

19 See the arguments set out in Nicodemus, E (1997) Representing African Art: A Challenge by the Exhibition "Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa" unpublished paper, pp1-18, and Ogbechie, S (1997) 'Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in "Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa"' in *African Arts*, no1, Winter, p.84.

20 Barker, E (1999) *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, p.13.

21 See Araeen 'From Primitivism to Ethnic Arts' in Hiller, S, ed (1991) *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, London: Routledge, pp.158-185; Oguibe 'In the Heart of Darkness' in Enwezor, O, and Oguibe, O, eds (1999) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, Institute of International

Visual Arts, London, pp.320-28; and McEvilley, T (1992) *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity*, McPherson and Company, New York.

22 See both the reference to Sokari Douglas Camp in Mack, J, ed (2000) *Africa: Arts and Cultures*, British Museum Press, London, p.26, and the conflicting reference in the exhibition catalogue by Pep Subiros (2001) *Africas: The Artist and the City, a Journey and an Exhibition,* Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona, Spain. Here Subiros recollects a telephone conversation with Camp in which the artist says: 'Another African art exhibition?! She exclaimed after I sketched out the project for her. I'm fed up, she told me nicely, but without giving ground. She's tired of being seen only as an African artist, that she is classified as an "ethnic" artist, "of anthropological interest". She is an artist period. Without denomination of origin stamped on her forehead', p.14.

It seems that whilst artists like Camp openly voice their concerns over issues of misrepresentation, they are still lured by the rewards of exhibiting at venues such as the British Museum. African artists are often at the mercy of the "bread-and-butter" syndrome.

27 Araeen 'From Primitivism to Ethnic Arts' in Hiller, S, ed (1991)*The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, Routledge, London, pp.158-185.

23 Serota, N and Jantjes, G (1986) *From Two Worlds*, Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, p.6.

24 McEvilley, T (1992) *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity*, McPherson and Company, New York, p.87 and p.11.

25 ibid, p.87.

26 Karp, I, and Lavine, S, eds (1991) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, p.15.

27 ibid, p.15.

28 Njami, S (1999) 'The Curator as a Naked King: Contextualisation and Decontextualisation' in *South Meets West*, NAWAO Produktion, Zurich, p.52.

29 Kasfir-Littlefield, S 'African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow' in Enwezor, O, and Oguibe, O, eds (1999) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, Institute of International Visual Arts, London, p.98.

30 Enwezor, Okwui (1994) 'Redrawing the Boundaries: Towards a New African Art Discourse' in *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Issue 1, Winter, pp.3-4.

31 Gani Odotukon spoke about the experiences of an artist as embracing the whole of human imagination: . . . "While it acknowledges the presence of tradition in our societies, it is aware that, every society is affected by cultural changes. These changes may be brought about or are influenced by the culture of others" in the catalogue for

the exhibition Accident and Design: Gani Odotukon and his Influences (1998) Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, p12.
32 Wallach, A (1998) *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Massachusetts, p.120-121.

33 ibid, p.120.

34 ibid, p.126.

35 ibid, p.125.

36 ibid, p.126.

37 Araeen, R (1989) 'Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse' in *Third Text:: Third World Perspectives on Art and Culture* , Special Issue 6: Magiciens de la Terre, Spring, p.11.

38 Ross, D (1996) 'africa95: Many Stories about the Art of a Continent' in *Africa Arts*, Special Issue No 3: africa95, Summer, p.6. In this article the author refers to the exhibition Africa: Art of the Continent as a survey, infact this exhibition organized by the Royal Academy included over 850 art objects.

39 Picton, J (1996) 'africa95 and the Royal Academy' in *Africa Arts*, Special Issue No3: africa95, Summer, p.23.

40 Silva, B, 'africa95: Cultural colonialism or cultural celebration' in Deepwell, K (1997) *Art Criticism and Africa*, Saffron Press, London, pp.15-20.

41 Nzegwu, N (1999) *Crossing Boundaries: Gender Transmogrification of African Art History in Crossroads*, National Gallery of Art, Abuja.

42 ibid, p.65.

43 Vogel gives a detailed explanation to the motivation behind her exhibitions in the article 'Always True to the Object' Karp and Lavine, eds (1991) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Smithsonian Institution, United States, pp191-205.

44 Court, E, 'A Blockbuster and its antidote: africa95' in Barker, E (1999) *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, pp.159-172, and Kasfir, S (1999) *Contemporary African Art,* Thames & Hudson, London.

45 Ogbechie, S (1997) 'Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in "Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa"' in *African Arts*, no1, Winter, p.84.

46 Oguibe, O (1993) 'Review of Africa Explores' in *African Arts*, January, pp16-22.

47 Ogbechie, S (1997) 'Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in "Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa"' in *African Arts*, no1, Winter, p.84.

48 Ngugi, T (1993) *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, James Curry Ltd, London.

49 Oguibe, O, 'In the Heart of Darkness' in Enwezor, O & Oguibe, O (eds) (1999) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Ybarra-Frausto,T, 'The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art in Karp, I, & Lavine, S (1991) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, pp.128-151.

50 Goswamy, B.N, 'Another Past, Another Context: Exhibiting Indian Art Abroad' in Karp, I, & Lavine, S (1991) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display ,* Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, pp.68-79.

51 Osuala, E (1982) *Introduction to Research Methodology,* Africana-FEP Publishers Ltd, Nigeria, p.138.

52 Swetnam, D (2000) *Writing Your Dissertation,* How To Books, Ltd, Oxford, p.105.

53 Enwezor, O & Oguibe, O (eds) (1999) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p.14.

54 Hill and Kerber (1967) *Models, Methods and Analytical Procedures in Educational Research ,* Wayne State University Press, Detroit.

55 Ikwuemesi, K (2002) *Reports on The Pan-African Conference on the Status, Role and Working Condition of the Artist in Africa,* PACA, Enugu, p.4.

56 Swetnam, D (2000) *Writing Your Dissertation,* How To Books, Ltd, Oxford, p.57.

57 Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) *Research Methods in Education,* Routledge, London & New York, p.283.

58 Fieldwork has been encouraged for research students since the 1920's, when American anthropologists, such as Melville Herskovitz (1985-1963) and William Bascom (1912-1981), began to make systematic research in Africa and the Americas.

59 Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) *Research Methods in Education,* Routledge London & New York, p.283.

60 Coding is defined by Kerlinger, F, in Foundations of Behavioural Research (1970) Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, as the "translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis", p.54.

61 Brenner, M, Brown, J, and Canter, D (1985) *The Research Interview ,* Academic Press Inc., London, p.53, set out several steps in undertaking a content analysis of open-ended data:

Step 1	Briefing (understanding the problem and its context in detail.
Step 2	Sampling (of people, including the types of sample sought).
Step 3	Associating (with other work that has been done).
Step 4	Hypothesis development.
Step 5	Hypothesis testing.
Step 6	Immersion (in the data collected, to pick up clues).
Step 7	Categorising (in which the categories and their labels must: (a) reflect the purpose of the research; (b) be exhaustive; (c) be mutually exclusive).
Step 8	Incubation (e.g. reflecting on data and developing interpretations and meanings).
Step 9	Synthesis (involving a review of the rationale for coding and an identification of the emerging patterns and themes).
Step 10	Culling (condensing, excising and even reinterpreting the data so that they can be written up intelligibly).
Step 11	Interpretation (making meaning of the data).
Step 12	Writing, including: giving clear guidance on the incidence of occurrence; proving an indication of direction and intentionality of feelings; being aware of what is not said as well as what is said - silences; indicating salience (to readers and respondents).
Step 13	Rethinking.

62 Jari, J, and Nwankwo, A (1998) *Accident and Design: Gani Odotukon and his Influences,* London University Press, London, p.10.

63 Vogel, S (1999) 'Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion' in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, pp.191-205, also refer to the exhibition catalogue Vogel, S (1987) *Perspectives: Angles on African Art ,* New York, Center for African Art.

64 Nicodemus, E (1995) 'And Occasionally a Floating White Boy' in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art,* no.2, Spring/Summer, p.11.

65 See *Approved Minimum Academic Standards in Environmental Sciences,* National Universities Commission, Lagos.

66 Two initiatives encouraging student participation in university exhibitonary projects are: the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, end of year exhibition "Footprints: New Painters from Nsukka" organised by Krydz Ikwuemesi, and held in 2002 at the National Museum, Enugu; and also the quarterly "Benin City Art" exhibition project coordinated by Manasseh Imonikebe of the University of Benin, and held at the Oba Akenzua II Cultural Complex, Benin City, since 1999.

67 Oguibe, 0 (1999) 'In the 'Heart of Darkness' in *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to Marketplace ,* The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, p.321.

68 Edwards, S (ed) (1999) *Art and its Histories: A Reader,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.14.

69 Araeen, R (1989) *Postscript The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain Hayward Gallery,* London, p.105.

70 See press briefing for AHAN: Art Historical Association of Nigeria, made by the association president, Professor Olu Oloide, at the University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, 21st August 2002.

71 Nicodemus, E (1995) 'And Occasionally a Floating White Boy' in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art,* no.2, Spring/Summer, p.11.

72 Ikwuemesi, K, and Aniakor, A (2000) *Crossroads: Africa in the Twilight* National Gallery of Art, Abuja.

73 ibid, p.6.

74 Nzegwu, N (2000) 'Crossing Boundaries: Gender Transmogrification of African Art History' in *Crossroads,* National Gallery of Art, Abuja, p.65.

75 For further details of the exhibitions curated by Omoighe see the artist curriculum vitae in Omoighe, M (2000) *Survival Romance,* Ovomaroro Gallery Production, Lagos, p.29.

76 It should be noted that Ikwuemesi did curate an exhibition centred around the theme of "nudity", titled *The Nude Figure Never Sleeps,* November 1996, however the exhibition was not located in the predominantly Muslim north, where the subject matter could be found offensive, but in the fairly liberal eastern city, Enugu.

77 See the catalogues: *Folklore Exhibition: An Exhibition of Nigerian Folklore* (1996) curated by Kunle Filani; *Our Environment* (1999) curated by Kunle Filani; and *Benin City Art* (quarterly from 1999) curated by Manasseh Imonikebe.

78 Details of articles written by Kunle Filani can be found in the exhibition catalogue *Patterns of Ona* (1997) which contains a full list of publications.

79 The Pan-Africa Circle of Artists, or PACA, was founded in 1999, and is presently headed by Ayo Adewunmi (president) and Krydz Ikwuemesi (international secretary). The group has been successful in promoting Nigerian art and artists through exhibitions, workshops, lectures and conferences, and encouraging international linkages. One example of PACA's efforts is the most recent of it's biennales, the 4th Biennale show, 'Changing Attitudes', this consisted of three related exhibitions: Transitions and Continuities; Petals of Blood and Theatres of Disaster; and Between Hope and Impediment, as well as cyber and round table conferences.

80 Oguibe, O (2000) Letter Concerning the 25th Bienal of Sao Paulo.

81 See Appendix IV Bibliography of Exhibition Catalogues, p.149, and Appendix V, Table 3, Visual Arts Sponsorship in Nigeria, p.151.

82 Refer to the exhibition catalogue *Man & Society,* curated by Mike Omoighe (2002), National Gallery of Arts, Abuja, p.5.

83 Refer to Okpe, T (1995) 'Zaria: Hands Together' in *Footprints*, Goethe Institut, Lagos, p.41.

84 Refer to Fasuyi (1973) *Nigerian Cultural Policy,* Paris: UNESCO, and Ikpakronyi, S (2002) *The Development of the National Gallery of Art and the National Studios of Art in Nigeria,* National Gallery of Art, Abuja, p.15.

85 Ikpakronyi, S (2002) 'Professional Associations of Modern Nigerian Visual Artists: Path to Otu Ewena Artists' in *Man and Society,* National Gallery of Art, Abuja, pp.66-80.

86 ibid, p.67.

87 The issue of sponsorship and the arts was discussed by the writer of this research and David Roberts in July, 2001, when in the process of fundraising for an exhibition of art organised annually by the Nigerian organisation "Kinesis, Women, Art & Science".

88 Refer to Okpe, T (1995) 'Zaria: Hands Together' in *Footprints,* Goethe Institut, Lagos:, p.41.

89 Nimbus Art Gallery, Didi Museum, and Signature Art Gallery, are all based in Lagos, and are currently under the direction of Chike Nwagbogu, Newton and Elizabeth Jibunoh, and Hussein Akhar.

90 Gurain, E, 'Noodling Around with Exhibition Opportunities' in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, pp.176-191.

91 Refer to the article written by Jahman Anikulapo for Nigerian daily newspaper The Guardian, Thursday, November 19, 1998, pp.44-45.

92 Refer to Appendix II Completed Questionnaires, Slyvestor Ogbechie.

93 Refer to the exhibition catalogue for the 2nd Johannesburg Bienniale *Trade Routes: History and Geography,* directed by Okwui Enwezor (1997), Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development.

94 The exhibition, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* was exhibited at Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York, between 2001-2002.

95 Refer to Appendix II Completed Questionnaires, Chika Okeke.

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APPENDICES I-VII

Appendix I Transcribed Oral Interview Schedules

Interviews held in Nsukka

Date: 26 August 2002

Respondent: Okpan Oyeoke, Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Oyeoke: I am the head of the department of fine and applied arts, and l am also a professor of ceramics.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Oyeoke: There are no courses in curation per se. Although aspects of art history may consider related issues, there is a course titled "Museum Studies and Tourism" but it is not available in this department. I am aware of a course approved by the National Universities Commission titled "Museology and Art History" which covers the areas of techniques, cataloguing, presentation and display, but it is not available here.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Oyeoke: Yes, it is important, but this does not warrant the introduction of a specialist course or program, possibly an interdisciplinary approach would suffice.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Oyeoke: No, not to my knowledge.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Oyeoke: Students organise their own shows, including end of year shows, as an extra-curriculum activity at the university gallery "ANA" run by Mr Godson Diogu of Textile Design. He is not a professional curator.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Oyeoke: Yes, as students of art history must take courses in museology from the department of architecture. The curriculum is broad based for individuals to introduce non-syllabus matter if they feel they are relevant. Also the course 241: "Museology" gives an introduction to the origins, types, function and organisation of museums, with topics such as the problems of developing museums in Africa, open air and indoor exhibitions, and the concept of the living museum.

Date: 26 August 2002

Respondent: Ola Oloidi, Lecturer of Art History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Oloidi: I am an art historian and an art critic.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Oloidi: No, curatorship is not seen as important but instead as incidental, it is not yet viewed as a unique profession in relation to art.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Oloidi: Yes [emphasis] courses are very important, although other neglected areas are equally as important. Art history and anthropology are not sufficient.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Oloidi: No, students are generally not aware.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Oloidi: Not at all, [disdain] the university gallery, "ANA", does not function as a gallery should [exclamation] it is only a storage space.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Oloidi: No, new courses need to be introduced [pause] art history especially needs revision, that is approaches to art history. You can see what l mean if you examine the first "AHA" news releases and related newspaper articles.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Oloidi: Yes, in the manner of selection though rather than curation.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Oloidi: I started due to an initial invitation to curate in 1994, [pause] but l must emphasise that l do not see myself as a curator, it is not my profession.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Oloidi: None, not in an intellectual quality.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Oloidi: Guinness and "S.N.A", both used to be quite active, but no longer function as such.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Oloidi: Institutions, such as Guinness funded many projects in the past. They had no influence whatsoever.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Oloidi: My objectives are to achieve a professionalism, or standard for exhibition.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Oloidi: The interests of the proposed audience, usually Nigerian.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Oloidi: It depends on the individual concept.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Oloidi: [exclamation] Yes, always.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Oloidi: Yes, it depends on the subject matter, for instance war and Biafra.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Oloidi: Curation has changed in response to changes in style, and changes in the artists themselves.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Oloidi: Rarely, but yes l was invited to work in Geneva in 1995 for an exhibition organised by the "S.N.A", WIPO: Nigerian Works.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Oloidi: There is subjectivity in the art profession, and therefore one does not have to be a professional curator to curate.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Oloidi: There must be more funding, energy, and objectivity in the selection of art works.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Oloidi: I cannot pass a conclusive judgment as l have not seen any of these exhibitions. However, it appears that such curators succumb to Western dictates, asserting certain ideas that are credited to be African, as it is generally the West that is providing the money for such ventures. They are too often subjective.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Oloidi: They are already programmed, for instance Documenta seems cultic.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Oloidi: The African individual, if not sold out, such as Olu Oloide.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Oloidi: Art exhibitions and those who create them must strive for a greater professionalism. Art historians should be more involved and must question their discipline.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Oloidi: There should be greater links between curators per se, not just African curators.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Oloidi: They could provide incentives for new contacts, courses etcetera.

Date: 26 August 2002

Respondent: El Anatsui, Lecturer of Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Anatsui: I am an artist.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Anatsui: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Anatsui: I was invited by the Goethe Institut, Lagos, in 1999, to introduce new artists to the public together with experienced and established artists. In 2001 l initiated an exhibition of students work inspired by the uses of new media.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Anatsui: My Qualifications? [pause] I am a human being with sensitivity, one does not need to be an art historian to curate.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Anatsui: My greatest link is through the university.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Anatsui: The Goethe Institut has given space, but funds are raised by self. They have no influence.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Anatsui: Cultural, an exploration to provoke controversy, to educate and broaden outlooks. The objectives of an exhibition should be to agitate the publics tastes, the artist or curator should take up a leadership role.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Anatsui: The interests of the artist, then the proposed audience.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Anatsui: Media is the basic deciding factor, l select those who do not do the run-of-the-mill things.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Anatsui: You can't rule out location, consciously, unconsciously or subconsciously.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Anatsui: Yes, an exhibition is not purely aesthetic, but is also cultural, it functions to engender change.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Anatsui: No great changes.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Anatsui: No, however l have selected artists as a committee member for the "DAKART", Senegal 2000.

Saunders: What is the difference, if any, between national and international projects?

Anatsui: The criteria is the same, group selection in my experience is pretty straight forward.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Anatsui: Nigeria has only had a very short history of curation in relation to Western standards, there are, for instance, no schools offering curation as a specialist subject.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Anatsui: Platforms should be provided in order that efforts be emulated. There is [emphasis] an absolute need for better courses with cultural specifity, in other words, African cultural views must fight against Western criteria.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Anatsui: In a way, given their circumstances.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Anatsui: There is still a bracketing as "African", it does seem that artists of African decent are entering the mainstream, but l believe there are today many streams.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Anatsui: Western curators with a good grounding in African art are doing a good job, likewise as are experienced African curators.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Anatsui: African curators living in the West are dominating the field, and will do for some time as Nigeria is not producing curators.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Anatsui: Universities and galleries have an important role to play, they must have an educational intent and not a commercial one, they must lead tastes and not follow or simply reflect them.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Anatsui: Specialist staff are essential.

Date: 27 August 2002

Respondent: Mr Krydz Ikwuemesi, PACA Curator/Director & Lecturer of Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Ikwuemesi: I am first an artist, second a theorist, but not a critic.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ikwuemesi: Yes, in 1990 l organised an exhibition for classmates sponsored by the French Embassy in Enugu. I also wrote the introduction to "Visual Orchestra", this exhibition was made an annual event from 1992.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Ikwuemesi: I have no formal training in curation, only painting, however l read extensively about the work of other curators. I don't feel that to be a curator you have to be academically trained, the training of an artist should be enough.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Ikwuemesi: PACA, all the exhibitions from 1992 to present. We try to tell the story of PACA, as a group of artists rather than individuals.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Ikwuemesi: From both local patronage and membership. Local patronage is an issue as most artists are, of course, conscious of sales. Funding and donations are also encouraged form members and other individuals. We also organise fundraising events and shows. No, sponsors have no influence.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Ikwuemesi: I aim to demonstrate certain things that can be experienced within Africa as well as elsewhere. To create literature, international exhibitions and forums in a variety of locations, not only in Lagos. I also try to accommodate as many artists as possible, both local and foreign, and allow them to exploit their own aesthetic values.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Ikwuemesi: I invite works and then select internally. Artists past and present, local and foreign are included.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Ikwuemesi: I respect the artists competence on what can stand as art. I do not look at a so-called "local" criteria, its parameters or philosophy. I look at thematic vision in relation to the immediate environment, so each work is looked at in the context of its own background.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Ikwuemesi: Yes, the audience must be considered whether international or national. Some works of art may be unacceptable to a particular audience, for instance nudity. Therefore an exhibition must always seek to relate to the intellectual level of a particular audience.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Ikwuemesi: Yes, cultural identity, as it affects the artist, nationalism, internationalism [pause] both political and cultural. Issues concerning the environment, in order that the artist becomes socially relevant. In 2002 we are looking at globalisation, photography, and the propagation of art in Africa.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Ikwuemesi: It depends on the individual curator. In the early years of exhibition the curator was someone who got works together, now people are more wary of a curators motives. The work has therefore, become more difficult, more serious, and aims to leave a document of its objectives in a catalogue form.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Ikwuemesi: No, l have not yet been invited to work on an international project. However, participation within Nigeria is becoming more international, so no need for a parachute experience.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Ikwuemesi: To some extent this is true, as there are no real curators here. No-one really writes and researches well, we have only superficial curators. The few real African curators are those working outside. Unfortunately they've an inclination towards Western aesthetics, and although they advertise themselves as the flag of Africa this is contradicted in their lack of knowledge concerning what is really going on in Africa today.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Ikwuemesi: What is needed is more curatorship within Nigeria, international university degrees do not solve practical problems.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Ikwuemesi: No, they deem to be representatives of Africa only in order to gain grants etcetera. They have failed to put records straight. We should ask the questions: Do they work here? For Africa? Do they pose a credible opposition to the Western model? The projects they work on are usually located in the West.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Ikwuemesi: There is more international awareness of African art now, but still only a few African artists have been able to break into the mainstream. The challenge is to reinvent the African environment, to allow for international exhibitions to take place within the continent, for instance "DAKART" in Dakar, Senegal.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Ikwuemesi: Representation may not be best if self-representation, the involvement of outsiders can be refreshing. However, at some point we should be able to relate our own story. Africans should talk on their own terms from their own environment, but allowing outsiders to come to them and participate. [emphasis] With a lack of exhibition materials, for instance catalogues, the whole exhibitionary practice in Nigeria seems like a fairy tale!

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ikwuemesi: I feel the future of the enterprise is bright. Africans will return, must return, to work for the African people, from within the African environment and speak to the world on African terms, returning the gaze. This cannot be achieved by sitting down overseas.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Ikwuemesi: More interaction. For a true representation to be made of African art, African curators must discuss and analyse traditions from the inside.

Interviews held in Enugu

Date: 27 August 2002

Respondent: S. Onyeneke, Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu.

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Onyeneke: I am a textiles lecturer.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Onyeneke: Art courses, electives, as general course cut across all art courses. There are, however, no specific courses. This follows the NBTE program. Lecturers can, and do, use their own discretion if they wish to teach curation.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Onyeneke: I'm not personally aware of the current debate.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Onyeneke: No, l don't think so.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Onyeneke: The students organise an end of year show at the time of their graduation, at this time the lecturers work alongside the students.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Oyeneke: I would like to see new courses, especially theoretical.

Date: 27 August 2002

Respondent: Ayo Adewunmi, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu.

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Adewunmi: I am a graphics lecturer.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Adewunmi: Art history.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Adewunmi: Yes, l do, students do not know what is really going on internationally.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Adewunmi: To some extent yes, not as much as in the past though. They are no longer equipped to defend themselves, their work.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Adewunmi: No, however they are encouraged to organise their own exhibitions. This is not professional.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Adewunmi: No, more specialist courses are needed, [concern] the curriculum has not been reviewed in years, and is no longer relevant to changing needs.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Adewunmi: Yes, l have co-curated with Krydz Ikwuemesi on projects for PACA, including the 2000 Biennial.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Adewunmi: Largely due to the influence of Ikwuemesi, beginning with his organisation of the “Images Club” which was based at ABU, Zaria. This influence has continued by means of the art organisation PACA.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Adewunmi: I have no specialist qualification, however l feel a masters degree in painting and basic art history from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is sufficient.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Adewunmi: I joined PACA in 1994-5, and began to assist Ikwuemesi.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Adewunmi: No specific funders, however Prince Claus of the Netherlands has sponsored members of PACA to produce an exhibition catalogue. [emphasis] Little to no funding comes from the government.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Adewunmi: Combined really, for instance in 1999 PACA held an exhibition entitled "Songs of Gold" which highlighted or celebrated Nigeria's return to democracy.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Adewunmi: The interests of the West can, and should be contested, and influences from within should be emphasised alongside that of a particular individual.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Adewunmi: It depends on the audience.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Adewunmi: Yes, in some ways, as an individual as well as an Nigerian.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Adewunmi: Yes, in various ways depending on the artist.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Adewunmi: Yes, through a greater exposure, both personal looking out and from the interest of those from the outside looking in.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Adewunmi: I have organised a seminar for PACA for the Japan Foundation, Japan. It centred on issues pertaining to art in Africa.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Adewunmi: I feel Nigerian expatriates do not represent Nigerian art today. I believe they are out of touch with what is really going on. They downplay Nigerian curators working within Nigeria, and they exclude the involvement of these curators on their projects, even when held, or partially held within Nigeria, for example Documenta.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Adewunmi: More involvement is required of associations, the organisation of international forums for example. Schools of art should reassess curriculums, as they certainly do not reflect current trends, or encourage curatorial studies, emphasis is on practical art making.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Adewunmi: No, they know what they can do, but don't. They project their own interests [pause] they should be more active within Nigeria.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Adewunmi: Some are, but the majority are working within an "Africa" framework, and making popular what they see as "African".

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Adewunmi: Curators who are familiar in the African context, not those residing solely in the West. You cannot speak about the issues from the outside, African art is site specific.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Adewunmi: I think there will be an increased awareness of international issues on art, as more international seminars are organised here and abroad.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Adewunmi: Organisations, like PACA, play an important role. There is a need to create more exposure of artists in order to gain a wider perspective, such as biennials like those of PACA. International contacts must be made and nurtured so insiders can be heard.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Adewunmi: They should use their influence to change things at the tertiary level, including art history. More involvement is needed by art historians in the exhibitionary process, courses should be theoretical as well as practical.

Date: 27 August 2002

Respondent: Okay Ikenegbu, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu.

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Ikenegbu: I am an artist and sculptor..

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Ikenegbu: No, courses are [emphasis] definitely not sufficient in this area, [pause] art history does not cover contemporary issues and debates and unfortunately we do not have a working gallery either.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Ikenegbu: Yes, as l feel even Africans are misrepresenting African art.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Ikenegbu: No, unless for the personal interest and effort of an individual lecturer.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Ikenegbu: Sometimes students get the opportunity to work alongside the PACA organisers, such as Adewunmi. They are also encouraged to organise their own shows.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Ikenegbu: No, there is a gap as "exhibition" is not recognised for what it is, students see exhibition only in terms of financial reward and not as a means of exposure or exposition. There is a need to reeducate them over the importance, function and power of the exhibition.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ikenegbu: Yes, l have curated for students and staff regularly.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Ikenegbu: In response to a need within the institute, and a personal interest.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Ikenegbu: No formal qualifications, as in Nigeria there are none, but as an artist l feel somewhat better equipped than others to curate on the national level.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Ikenegbu: No institutions, only for the state, for the Enugu state council of arts and culture.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Ikenegbu: My exhibitions are either self-funded by myself and the participating artists, or occasionally government aided.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Ikenegbu: It depends, however l feel it is important to make a statement relevant to the present age.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Ikenegbu: Artists are chosen as representative in theme, media or method of the local environment, not those aspiring to, or aping western models.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Ikenegbu: I consider ingenuity, individuality and the individual artists message.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Ikenegbu: Yes, as l am well versed in this area, this is important. However, l see works as having a universal message.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Ikenegbu: Yes, a group theme is important as it gives more impact.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Ikenegbu: No real changes have been made, societies are static, most exhibitions remain largely commercial ventures, this poses some restraints on the curator.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Ikenegbu: No, l have never been given the opportunity.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Ikenegbu: Yes, l am particularly concerned that our own state councils do not employ qualified artists.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Ikenegbu: Square pegs in round holes should be eliminated. Artists themselves should take over. Curatorial courses could help, l feel that artists with curatorial experience would prove to be better equipped than a curator with no art background.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Ikenegbu: No, they are concerned with economics alone, they do not paint a good picture of what is happening in Nigeria, its a bit like who pays the piper, they say what the "other" wants them to.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Ikenegbu: No, they portray their own selfish interests rather than a collective interest. African art today is different than that of the past, they are out of touch.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Ikenegbu: It depends, [pause] formally trained African artists seem to be better equipped.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ikenegbu: The situation can be improved, but African nations must sponsor artists and exhibitions. At the moment the West dictates what is seen and shapes what is produced.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Ikenegbu: This depends largely on curriculum planners, at the moment curriculums at institutes of higher education are not orientated towards curation, and are not organised, or discussed by professionals in this area.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Ikenegbu: By lobbying to make curriculum changes.

Date: 27 August 2002

Respondent: Ngozi Ezeudu, Curator, Bona Art Gallery, Enugu

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Ezeudu: I am the curator of Bona Gallery, Enugu.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ezeudu: Yes, l started by assisting at the gallery part-time.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Ezeudu: I have no specific qualifications, but l do have a degree in English literature and have taught myself about art by reading widely. I have a personal attachment to art.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Ezeudu: AKA Group from 1986 to 1999, and l also organise exhibitions for the sculptors Guild. I have been AKA's sole curator; my job is to organise the exhibitions and to advise artists over which works to present, however l do not have the final word on selection.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Ezeudu: The gallery is self-funding, works are sold commercially, this helps us to organise free exhibitions for public viewing. I feel art awareness is fairly low in Nigeria so the aim of free exhibitions is to bring the public closer to art and into the gallery space.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Ezeudu: Definitely aesthetic, the artist comes to the gallery with works containing individual themes, however art works are not selected according to an overall theme. Themes are not always suitable for a public space, as works must be commercially viable.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Ezeudu: Past catalogues are referred to for ideas, and then works are brought to the gallery for further appreciation. I look at the aesthetic qualities and the overall presentation of a work.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Ezeudu: Really personal preference, l look at each artist as an individual with his or her own idea of creativity.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Ezeudu: Yes, as the works must appeal to the audience, the local community.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Ezeudu: No, not at all.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Ezeudu: Not drastically.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Ezeudu: No, l have never been invited, and personal funds are too low.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Ezeudu: I don't agree, l feel that the people who speak about African art often give the wrong impression of what is really going on here, there is a certain amount of ignorance and generalisation in what they say. I believe that a love of art is more important than a formal qualification.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Ezeudu: No comment.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Ezeudu: No comment.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Ezeudu: Not really, l am more concerned about the promotion of art at home in Nigeria.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Ezeudu: I have very limited knowledge of this debate and would rather not comment on it.

Interviews held in Benin

Date: 30 August 2002

Respondent: Ellis Erimona, Head of the Department of Fine Arts, University of Benin, Benin

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Erimona: I am a lecturer of sculpture.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Erimona: No, nothing in particular, however art history may have some relevant courses.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Erimona: Yes, l do. It's an interesting and important area. Students should be made aware of what is happening internationally in order that they can compete on a more equal basis.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Erimona: No, its currently left to the individual lecturers own discretion to introduce such issues into existing courses.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Erimona: Well they are encouraged to exhibit as students, and more recently have had the opportunity in working for lecturers in a quarterly project in cooperation with the Oba Akenzua II Cultural Complex, Benin City, called Benin City Art.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Erimona: It could definitely be improved by the addition of more specialist courses, whether theoretical or practical.

Date: 30 August 2002

Respondent: M.E Imonikebe, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine Arts, University of Benin, Benin

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Imonikebe: I am a lecturer of fine art, painting.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Imonikebe: We do run course "Materials and Methods", 300 level, which includes a little about exhibition and curation. We are also presently thinking about introducing marketing.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Imonikebe: Yes, there is a lack of exposure here.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Imonikebe: No, as the emphasis is on the local environment.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Imonikebe: Sometimes at the museum in Benin.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Imonikebe: I am presently studying curriculum studies, and see a need in changing the current curriculum to include more relevant courses, the introduction of courses, however, should not displace others.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Imonikebe: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Imonikebe: In 1975 l began to teach art at primary school level, and organised small exhibitions and competitions.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Imonikebe: I have no formal qualifications, my knowledge comes from personal efforts.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Imonikebe: None, l have only organised exhibitions with the university.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Imonikebe: I think exhibition is relatively a new area, and suffers from a lack of exposure. Self-funding is the most common means of funding here.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Imonikebe: Creativity, physcology of the local people is studied. There are no themes yet at this initial stage as many people would not understand the issues presented.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Imonikebe: Individual.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Imonikebe: With the Benin City Art exhibition only formally trained artists are allowed to submit works for selection. I generally approach artists who are already known.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Imonikebe: No.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Imonikebe: No.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Imonikebe: Yes, drastically, there are definitely more artists participating now and the exhibition of art is becoming more acceptable and publicity and sales are improving.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Imonikebe: No.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Imonikebe: I agree, yes, there is little to no formal training in the area of curation here in Nigeria, this may be due to a lack of sponsorship.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Imonikebe: We need more formality.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Imonikebe: No, they are too individualistic and seek only commercial gains, they have absolutely no links with home.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Imonikebe: No.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Imonikebe: Patriots as they can inspire artists and leaders.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Imonikebe: I see a positive future, the last half of the century was full of activity, more exhibitions and a greater local patronage, we have many art schools and an increasing number of students.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Imonikebe: The government, both state and federal, should be involved, especially the commission for arts and culture. We need more international exposure.

Date: 30 August 2002

Respondent: Augustine Bardi, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine Arts, University of Benin, Benin

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Bardi: I am a graphics designer.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Bardi: No, nothing.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Bardi: Very important, as they explore African art. I am presently attending a theoretical course myself at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in the art history section.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Bardi: A little perhaps in art history from 300 to 400 level.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Bardi: Only very little. The awareness is lacking and our gallery is no longer functional.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Bardi: No, students just follow their own preferences, there is no academic skill. More specific courses must be introduced that reflect current debates or African art.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Bardi: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Bardi: I started to exhibit my own works as a student, then in 1999 l initiated a quarterly exhibition called Benin City Art with a colleague. We felt that Benin is a popular name in art history and its important that name be maintained.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Bardi: No, no formal qualifications.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Bardi: I have worked with, and am a member of the "S.N.A" New associations are also coming up, for instance "A.I.D", which is already planning its first exhibition from September to November in Owerri.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Bardi: Finance is a problem, although we have had assistance for venues from the commissioner of information and culture, Edo State, however this was purely a result of his status as a graduate of the department.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Bardi: Aesthetic, art works are general, no theme.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Bardi: We use our own personal perspectives.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Bardi: Well treated, well framed, titled pieces with moderate prices.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Bardi: No, not at all.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Bardi: No, l simply look for originality.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Bardi: I don't think there has been much change.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Bardi: No.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Bardi: [hesitant] True.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Bardi: Improvements to sponsorship need to be made.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Bardi: Sorry, l have very little knowledge about this issue.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Bardi: It will improve, before nothing was happening.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Bardi: Workshops and courses need to be initiated. Lecturers who have overseas experience should help to raise standards.

Interviews held in Auchi

Date: 30 August 2002

Respondent: Ms Uhunmwagho, Head of the Department of Fine Arts (Painting), Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Uhunmwagho: I am the head of the department, painting.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Uhunmwagho: None. There is an overload of courses at present. We concentrate on the training of artists, and courses are therefore practical, the application and the appreciation of art.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Uhunmwagho: Very important, exhibitions are not properly curated here, and this undoes the artists.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Uhunmwagho: No they are not made aware of it.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Uhunmwagho: Yes, the lecturers and school hold exhibitions and students assist. We have no gallery but are in the process of building one on campus.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Uhunmwagho: Not sufficient, perhaps curation should be taught at the PG level.

Date: 30 August 2002

Respondent: Simeon Athekamhe, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine Arts, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Athekamhe: I am a painter.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Athekamhe: No.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Athekamhe: Art history discusses some issues pertaining to curation.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Athekamhe: Yes.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Athekamhe: Some, students are encouraged to attend exhibitions.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Athekamhe: It can't be sufficient, but curation is partially addressed.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Athekamhe: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Athekamhe: For instance, in October 1992 l curated the "Together Towards Tomorrow" exhibition at the National gallery, Lagos. This was an exhibition of lecturers work.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Athekamhe: I have no specific training, however over the last twenty years l have gained practical experience and have also taught art history.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Athekamhe: I have worked on behalf of the S.N.A, in the capacity of an advisor, discussing and previewing art works.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Athekamhe: There is little to no funding from individuals and private companies in Nigeria. However the government, the National Gallery of Art, and the National Council for Arts and Culture have helped on occasions.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Athekamhe: Aesthetic and historical, documentary.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Athekamhe: This is an institutional issue, papers come in with their own specifities.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Athekamhe: I ask lecturers to submit works, whatever is submitted l accept.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Athekamhe: Yes, for instance if choosing works for Lagos they will be different, themes are dependent on the environment and expected audience.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Athekamhe: [emphasis] Of course, art takes centre stage.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Athekamhe: Nothing much has changed.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Athekamhe: Not directly.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Athekamhe: I agree, it's a difficult world [exclamation] with time things will change.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Athekamhe: More education and opportunities are needed for African academics to be theoretically exposed, enabling them to challenge stereotypes. More interaction and mobility is also needed on both sides.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Athekamhe: Not sure.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Athekamhe: Some are making efforts, but most don't get the opportunity and travel is a problem.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Athekamhe: The African himself. As he has grown up and lived here.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Athekamhe: I see a promising future, opportunities must be forthcoming for greater acceptability.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Athekamhe: Curriculums should be exposed and addressed, and a greater access to materials is also needed.

Interviews held in Lagos

Date: 11 November 2002

Respondent: Mike Omoighe, Head of the Department of Fine Arts, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Omoighe: First an artist, in painting, but also an organiser.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Omoighe: Directly, no. Indirectly we give students the opportunity to package their own shows. There is, however no course in curatorship.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Omoighe: Of course, there are limitations that have caused shortcomings. What is taught is very different to what is really taught, curriculums are just a guide.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Omoighe: Cultural invasion is epidemic in Nigeria, we must talk more about culture.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Omoighe: No, except when with lecturers, for instance Unilever worked with lecturers and students.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Omoighe: Seriously deficient [exclamation] The curriculum is well overdue for revision.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Omoighe: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Omoighe: I had the unique opportunity to be trained by Bruce Onobrakpeya and l was made aware by him of exhibitions such as FESTAS 77, and have assisted Bruce ever since.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Omoighe: I did not have specific training, l rely on books and articles, and also events themselves. I have a varied experience of curation, working with Bruce on the Harmattan workshops, and also for the "S.N.A"

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Omoighe: I have worked for the "S.N.A", Yaba College of Technology and the National Gallery of Art.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Omoighe: Sometimes from private companies, such as Guinness, and sometimes through t he efforts of organisations as "S.N.A"

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Omoighe: I exhaust one subject matter and then move on to the next. For example titles of some of my exhibitions include: Journeys through the Savannah; Growth and Fear; Reality and Dreams; and Harmony and Nature.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Omoighe: I chose artists who can make my dream, as a curator, become reality.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Omoighe:Who is capable, and who fits the objectives of the exhibition in question.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Omoighe: No, the criteria is based on individual artists no matter where they are from.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Omoighe: It depends on the exhibitions concept. For instance Harmony in Nature had a universal concept.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Omoighe: Yes, curators now put more attention to words than art. There is more analysis.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Omoighe: Not directly, l have worked widely in Africa, in Lome, Accra, Benin and Ivory Coast, it is difficult to work internationally as there is a certain click that monopolise projects.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Omoighe: Right, and wrong. Africans do not have special training, but African curators who have had the opportunities have been able to marvel the world.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Omoighe: Africans need to fund their own projects in order to escape from the dictating of the West. Also cross-cultural projects should be encouraged.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Omoighe: Okwui and Oguibe, yes, they have done a good job and prove that big international projects can be achieved by Africans.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Omoighe: They generally seem to work with Africans living outside of Africa, but at least they do show an awareness, l suppose they are limited in what they can do as are reliant on Western sponsors.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Omoighe: African curators.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Omoighe: Bright. Soon resources will be realised in Nigeria.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Omoighe: The local environment must be conquered before we seek to expand our horizons. Cultural policy makers must be changed, artists alone can influence

decisions correctly. Funding must come from within as well as without, we should also plan our own biennial.

Date: 11 November 2002

Respondent: Olu Amoda, Lecturer of Art, Department of Fine Arts, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Amoda: I am a studio artist and then a lecturer.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Amoda: No, our historical legacy does not allow for more theoretical courses, courses are practical.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current discourse concerning the redefinition of African art being addressed largely by Africans in America?

Amoda: Of course, there are limitations that have caused shortcomings. What is taught is very different to what is really taught, curriculums are just a guide.Yes, we need to let student know the important role of curators today.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Amoda: We attempt to educate them on an individual level, sensitising them to issues.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Amoda: Students do their own shows, and there is an art association for students here, and this association has the responsibility of electing curators for student shows.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation and exhibition? If no, why? Could your curriculum be improved?

Amoda: I don't think the curriculum is sufficient at all, it is long overdue for revision.

Saunders: Have you ever curated and exhibition of contemporary African art?

Amoda: Sure.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Amoda: I felt l should get to know the general expectations that are placed on a curator, l have worked mostly privately.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Amoda: As a studio artist who has exhibited extensively l am quite aware of Nigerian contemporary art.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Amoda: I have curated for none.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Amoda: From artists, by means of entry for participation, local patronage is growing but it is still difficult to source funds locally. I am usually given a free hand.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Amoda: Both political and social.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Amoda: I am involved in the struggle for recognition of African artists, so l seek to project artists feelings and beliefs.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Amoda: As time is limited, due often to funding problems, l keep things fairly loose, often the personality of the artist informs more than the works.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Amoda: What is identity? A passport? An I.D card? I think identity is individual, a name not a culture. Therefore no l don't think nationality affects this criteria.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Amoda: Yes, presenting issues as they are is important, l do not believe in the naive, and l feel that the academically trained artist has not lost his or her cultural base.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Amoda: Shows are more controversial than they used to be, they raise important issues, and curators are more accountable, therefore many Nigerians take on the service of the curator but are reluctant to take on the tag of curator.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Amoda: Yes l do. The international exhibitions have less scrutiny by the local press, and here the curator is exposed to more conflict zones such as looking for artists who are willing to work to a theme and therefore loose work time, and also there is a big problem with the loss of works in transit.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Amoda: This line of argument is two edged, there were no curators in the past to instruct artists now Western curators are a way out.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Amoda: The debate is on, with projects such as DAKART raising issues.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Amoda: I saw Manifesta/Documenta and concluded on the artistic brief given to the curators that what is important is the theme or brief which can be criticised. Documenta was largely installation and performance, and as these art styles are not common in Africa they were prejudiced against the inclusion of African artists. However, perhaps Documenta can act as a future influence in Nigeria for an expansion of medium.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Amoda: Not really.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Amoda: I don't think the story should be told by or for Africans, curation would be best approached by a combination of both Western and African perspectives. You shouldn't forget that sometimes the projects themselves are larger than the actual curator.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Amoda: It is bright, artists are new, they are taking things in their own hands and not solely leaving exposure to curators.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Amoda: I think more advantage should be taken of IT in order that new 'local' trends be publicised.

Date: 12 November 2002

Respondent: Kunle Filani, Federal College of Education, Akoka, Lagos

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Filani: I am an artist, art historian and critic.

Saunders: How did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Filani: Really in response to university programs at the time of graduation, l felt the need to learn about exhibiting for the end of year show. At UniBen l was exposed to exhibition, display, choice and selection, text and catalogue.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Filani: I have only practical experience, as an artist you need to be able to curate your own work from time to time. I read widely in this area and view exhibitions and catalogues.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Filani: Usually for universities, l have organised Best of Ife which is an annual event, and also Ono based in Ife in the mid 1980's.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Filani: It is difficult to talk about funding, sometimes sponsorship comes from host galleries, sometimes individuals and sometimes societies and cultural centres, such as Goethe Institut. Local patronage is still low as there is only a small middle class in Nigeria.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Filani: It depends, but usually l like to look at the line of thought, either political or cultural, and always aesthetic. I prefer to match sensibility with skill.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Filani: The content of an exhibition must be meaningful nationally, themes should be localised for the local audience, they should communicate understanding.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Filani: It is a match of ideas and skills, the message, whether social or cultural, and how it is expressed to relate to the local people as a document.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Filani: Certainly. Art stems from nature, natural identity, a unique identity. People speak of globalisation and a shedding of identity but it should be an appreciation of identity.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Filani: Selection is often affected by bias, this should be shed in good curatorial practice. One should be able to situate oneself for adaption to a particular show, eg. gender/culture.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Filani: Not significantly. Perhaps the biggest change is the growing number of non-professional private galleries.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Filani: No

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Filani: To some extent, as there must be a task before one can test, a point of reference.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Filani: Participation and exposure. The opportunity to gain more experience, and to gain an appropriate education routed in local art and culture.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Filani: I feel, for instance, that Oguibe has sold out, he does not want to be seen as African but as an artist, he should choose a position either Africa or the West.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Filani: Not enough, they recirculate one group of artists only.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Filani: Africans themselves, but this should not be at the exclusion of Western curators, they should have their own contribution to make.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Filani: I feel things are moving too slowly, although at least now the West is talking about contemporary African art.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Filani: Must review local curriculums at art schools, and include new areas to expose artists to theory.

Date: 26 December 2002

Respondent: Ekpo Udo Udoma, Principle Consultant, Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation, Lagos

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Udoma: I am an art administrator and writer.

Saunders: How did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Udoma: I studied art in school and l have worked in various capacities as an art dealer, art gallery manager as well as exhibition consultant.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Udoma: I have degrees in Fines Art, Art History and Art Management from the University of Benin, Edo State Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria and the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York U.S.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Udoma: Most of my curatorial work has been in Nigeria. I have curated individual artists exhibitions since 1990. I have been curator for Art & Object Ltd, a commercial arts gallery which used to be located on Victoria Island a high brow commercial centre in Lagos, Nigeria. I worked for them from 1992-1996. From 1996-2000, l worked as a consultant curator for several galleries and individual art collectors. Presently l am the principal consultant to the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF) and have curated three major shows since October, 2001, when l joined BOF.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Udoma: Funding comes mainly from corporate sponsors. Although the Ford Foundation has assisted BOF, there is still need for funding from other sources. Local patronage is indeed very insufficient.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Udoma: The objectives of my exhibitions vary depending on the specific works on show. Most of the exhibitions l curate are commissioned therefore my curatorial work does not involve concept development.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Udoma: I have not been involved in selection of artists in most exhibitions l have curated. I only select when l have been specifically requested to do so.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Udoma: Works are usually evaluated based on popularity of artist, his or her antecedence i.e. where the artist schooled or whom he trained under, as well as societies perception of the artists themes and concepts.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Udoma: Well, that can not be ruled out.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Udoma: Yes, where possible.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Udoma: The most significant change is the prevalence of group exhibitions as opposed to the solo show, which was more common in the past. This can be attributed to the high cost of having exhibitions that individuals now have to bare due to the high cost of living. There are now more Nigerian organisations now being involved with exhibitions whereas in the past it was mainly the foreign embassies and cultural centres have been involved in the past.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Udoma: I work mainly nationally.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Udoma: I think this is a yes and no answer depending on who is talking. I think we have qualified curators in Africa, but the question remains qualified for what? Most curators in the West are usually working towards a Western agenda. This agenda may not necessarily be a preconceived one, in that it is specifically spelt out, but it is there whether we like it or not. Therefore you say there is a dearth of Western trained African curators l would therefore agree with you. However, we have eminently qualified people who can successfully curate any show of African art.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Udoma: I think part of the problem relates to the function which contemporary art plays in the African society. Here emphasis is placed on more financial benefits, as opposed to concepts and the dissemination of ideas. What needs to be done is for organisations in Africa to rise up to the occasion and focus more attention on conceptual work as opposed to the current situation whereby more emphasis is being placed on the sales of art.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Udoma: Some of the African curators are attempting to correct the misconceptions, however the avenues for this are usually very limited therefore a lot of what they are doing may not be receiving appropriate attention. For instance, the Encarta Africa published by Microsoft while containing a lot of information on the traditional art of Africa is silent on so many aspects of the contemporary African art, whereas there are several resource persons in this aspect who currently are living and working in the U.S.A.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Udoma: I think my last answer takes care of this.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Udoma: The question of who is better equipped to present African art in the West would depend on what is being presented. Sometimes a general overview may be what is required, at other times a more detailed study is required. In such cases, a person who is more knowledgeable because he has spent more time studying the details because a person who has a better understanding of the specific subject matter would definitely be a better choice to present a detailed exhibit. Whereas is what is required is just a general over view, it would not really matter.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Udoma: Definitely more compelling exhibitions are likely to come up as there continues to be an increasing interest in contemporary African art. What will however make the difference will depend on how effectively Africans can present Africa from an African perspective.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Udoma: There is need for African institutions and establishments to get involved in presenting Africa.

Interviews held in Abuja

Date: 12 March 2003

Respondent: Simon Ikpakronyi, Assistant Chief Curator, National Gallery of Art, Abuja

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Ikpakronyi: I am the assistant chief curator for the National Gallery of Art.

Saunders: How did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Ikpakronyi: I was employed by the National Gallery of Art, Nigeria, in 1993, first as a senior visual art officer, then was converted to the post of curator in 1998.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Ikpakronyi: I read art history at the level of first and second degrees. I have good experience in the packaging of visual art exhibitions.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Ikpakronyi: I have been curating for the National Gallery of Art. The National Gallery of Art is the apex institution in Nigeria in charge of modern Nigerian visual art. It is to serve as a repository for artistic creations since the birth of Nigeria as a nation.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Ikpakronyi: The National Gallery of Art, which l work with, is funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The N.G.A has sometimes asked for the type of exhibition to package, as for local patronage, it is still very low.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Ikpakronyi: The objectives of the N.G.A include reaching out to a wider audience, educating them on certain issues in the nation, making them appreciate art works. Above all, to improve the economy of artists.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Ikpakronyi: The interest of government, art patrons, and the general public often influence the selection of artists for our exhibitions. Of course, the interests of the N.G.A itself, should not be left out.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Ikpakronyi: Several criteria are used, they include the artist who produced the works, the theme and concept of the works, the media, techniques, handling, and age etcetera.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Ikpakronyi: No, our identity and location does not affect the above mentioned criteria in any way. Things are done in the manner that is supposed of them.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Ikpakronyi: In putting on a visual arts exhibition by the National Gallery of Art, art and culture issues are usually taken into consideration. Art works are judged in serious relation to the diverse cultures of Nigeria.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Ikpakronyi: The act of curating visual art has changed significantly in Nigeria today. Before now, there was no professional touch in the packaging of exhibitions. Today exhibitions of art works are packaged with required statements accompanying them, sending good messages to the general public.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Ikpakronyi: The N.G.A do package exhibitions both locally, nationally and internationally, most of which l was involved in.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Ikpakronyi: Though Africa has ways of curating its exhibitions, modern curation is better rooted in the West than in Africa. The act of curating has not been given the required attention in the past and is still relatively new to the continent.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Ikpakronyi: Through examples of Western curation African curators have taken up the challenge and pay attention to these exhibitions in order to improve. However, more training is needed!

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Ikpakronyi: The issue of misrepresentation is yet to be addressed appropriately. African curators in the West are still working to satisfy their sponsors as a result have

less to do in this direction. The issues of misrepresention can be properly handled by African curators living in Africa and curating African art both home and abroad.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Ikpakronyi: They are not, as they are doing things only for them to be accepted by the West. Even if they know, they have to be careful.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Ikpakronyi: African art can best be presented in the West by African art historians and curators living and working in Africa, and who have been following the true trends of things.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Ikpakronyi: There is great hope for the future of exhibition of contemporary African art. Great art historians and curators of African origin are emerging to do things for Africans, and no longer need Western curators to come to Africa and curate for them.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Ikpakronyi: The situation can be improved through t raining of art historians and art curators. Also, our problems have for a long time been due to sponsorship. If African curators here at home can be sponsored and left alone to do things as best they know things will improve.

Interviews held in Zaria

Date: 25 November 2002

Respondent: Jerry Buhari, Lecturer of Art, Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Buhari: I have a problem with the word professional as l do not see myself as a professional artist, l am professional in ethics only.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Buhari: We do, but the content and delivery may not bring an appropriate awareness to a full. Courses include art criticism, contemporary artists and new trends, and aesthetic and philosophical issues in painting and sculpture.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current struggles for the redefinition of African art being played out largely in Africans in America?

Buhari: Yes, absolutely, they help students to go beyond the 'box' of traditional thinking, to look at meaning and make challenges.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Buhari: To some extent, for instance the course "African images and Motifs" allows students to explore their own environment in a contemporary sense, unfortunately articulating ideas is sometimes a problem.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Buhari: No, not really, curatorial studies is a new field. There are few curators here with a background in curatorial scholarship, just practical experience.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation/exhibition? If no, why? How can the curriculum be improved?

Buhari: [exclamation] Certainly not! I would like to see a specific course developed to give more significance to the field.

Saunders: Have you ever curated an exhibition of contemporary African art?

Buhari: Yes, many.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Buhari: My curatorial experience has been circumstantial, not intentional. After the death of the curator at the "Avant Garde" gallery, Kaduna, l was asked to

commemorate the owner with an exhibition, to celebrate his ideas. I asked regulars with new works, the theme was life and sustainability.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Buhari: I can lay no claim to qualifications in the formal sense with regards to curation, but as an artist, l do understand the sensibility of artists and art works.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Buhari: I have curated most frequently for the S.N.A

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Buhari: Funding comes from individuals, these may have no influence. Poor budgets affect the quality of curation, issues include poor locations, and security. What we have here is a gorilla type of exhibitionary practice. Patronage? Are locals even aware that patronage is needed? Patrons must be soured more effectively.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Buhari: To form a dialogue between artists here at A.B.U and also with the Northern Nigerian community. To promote awareness for instance in 1985-6 staff of the department exposed their directions as individuals in a Jos exhibition.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Buhari: Essentially the organisers, artists, and other persons are external.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Buhari: I have a very liberal approach, i am attracted to colours and to chaotic forms, or imbalance.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Buhari: Yes, indirectly. As a minority l feel anonymous, somewhat like a spectator. My location in the university furthers this sense of freedom.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Buhari: No, not in the sense of art criticism, or art theory, but as seen in practice.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Buhari: Exhibition is no longer about showing what artists have done, but about what the curator has done. Before selection was for display alone, not looking at works that responded to the time, a safe, known name was more important than fashion.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Buhari: Yes, l have assisted in the selection of art works for an exhibition based in Switzerland and organised by the National Gallery of Art, Nigeria.

Saunders: If yes, what are the differences between working on national as opposed to international exhibitions?

Buhari: International exhibitions are "mega" shows with large budgets, spaces, and often multiple sites. A variety of works are shown, such as video, installation and they are a challenge, as a cosmopolitan approach must be taken, universality as opposed to locality.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Buhari: I agree, it is a statement of fact. Western curators are privileged to work on more sophisticated projects, we are so disadvantaged here.

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Buhari: There must be a deliberate reawakening of artists and art historians, and platforms must be made for critical discourse.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Buhari: Yes, mis/representation is polemic, the curator determines what strategy is followed. However, sometimes there is a tourist type representation, familiar or known works are preferred to new works. There is an issue of acceptability to a Western audience at play.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Buhari: [exclamation] The negotiations continue! They have at least forced an acknowledgement of art from Africa.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Buhari: African artists, Diasporic or national teams are a good thing, curators with different curatorial positions. Western curators have no patience for local artists, however do offer an understanding of developing trends.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Buhari: Difficult [pause] exhibition is about ideas not just works, and travelled artists should be equipped to confront the sophistication of curation, intimacy goes beyond familiarity.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Buhari: By a sound art history, informed by an intimacy of works and issues, and how these works fit into the world today.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Buhari: By encouraging awareness, giving information, going beyond the protection of local interests. They must educate on how to exist in the global art world, to take on a role that goes beyond the local and create discussions on the local and global.

Date: 26 November 2002

Respondent: Jacob Jari, Lecturer of Art, Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Interviewer: Nichola Saunders

Saunders: What is your professional status?

Jari: Maybe teacher first, then artist, but what l love best is writing and art history.

Saunders: Do you run programs relevant to the field of curation? Such as aesthetics or cultural representation? If no, why?

Jari: We must ask the question was there courses in curation anywhere in the world ten years ago? There are no direct courses in curation here, but there are some relevant courses.

Saunders: Do you feel such courses are important in the light of current struggles for the redefinition of African art being played out largely in Africans in America?

Jari: [exclamation] Absolutely [pause] there is a need for curatorial services, the putting up of shows and the contemplation of themes.

Saunders: Are students made aware of the politics of cultural representation?

Jari: I bring this up in many of my classes, but do not know to what extent other lecturers are making the same efforts with their students.

Saunders: Are students given the opportunity to work alongside experienced curators? If no, why?

Jari: Perhaps no, most students interest is to pass exams alone.

Saunders: Do you feel that your curriculum is sufficient in the area of curation/exhibition? If no, why? How can the curriculum be improved?

Jari: [exclamation] No! There has been the opportunity for changes to be made, there was infact an invitation for the discussion of such changes given by the exam committee, but this invitation was never taken up by the department. Courses such as art history should have a responsibility to discuss new trends such as installation and conceptualism, and issues pertaining to curation.

Saunders: Have you ever curated an exhibition of contemporary African art?

Jari: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, how did you get started in curating exhibitions of contemporary African art?

Jari: Before africa95, the UK based African arts season, curation in Nigeria has gained in vigour, it provoked much interest and opened new possibilities. 1994 there was a

pilot group created to discuss issues for africa95, although it was partially hijacked by the Nsukka members.

Saunders: What qualifications and experience do you have relevant to the field of curation?

Jari: I have a masters degree in art history and am currently reading for a Phd art history. I have also been involved in the Zaria based art society, the Eye society. I began to curate with the Jimoh Akolo retrospective exhibition held at the National Gallery of Art, Lagos, 1995.

Saunders: Which institutions or societies have you curated for? Can you tell me about them?

Jari: Mostly for the Eye society, and the university, however l was also involved in the curation of the exhibition Accident & Design which was shown at the Goethe Institut, Lagos, the British Council, Kaduna, and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Saunders: Where do you get your funding from? Do sponsors have any influence over the type of exhibitions you curate? Is local patronage sufficient?

Jari: The funding for the Jimoh Okolo exhibition came from the National Gallery of Art, however you do find that they usually support who they know. Funds are, however, generally soured from artist membership and individuals such as Captain Mu'Azu. It must be said that patronage is very low here, almost non-existent. These patrons have had no affect on the exhibitions they have supported.

Saunders: What are the underlying objectives of your exhibitions?

Jari: Until recently to raise awareness, but now l am beginning to look at exhibition more art historically, and am inclined to structured and thought out themes.

Saunders: Whose perspectives and interests influence the selection of artists?

Jari: Here juries or committees are used for the selection of art works for society or gallery inspired shows, their objectives are usually linked to the sales of works rather than any academic objective.

Saunders: What criteria is used in the evaluation of art works?

Jari: The artist determines the cost, so name is a big influence on selection.

Saunders: Does you identity and location affect this criteria?

Jari: Not as a selector, this is not relevant when working solely on national projects.

Saunders: Are critical issues of art and culture addressed in the exhibitionary process?

Jari: Yes, l am particularly concerned about the issue of tradition, l don't like the insistence on tradition, l like to have the freedom to choose.

Saunders: How has curation changed since you first set out in the field of exhibition?

Jari: I doubt if it has changed that much here due to an overall lack of interest, it is the same groups who continue to exhibit, such as PACA and AKA etcetera.

Saunders: Do you work internationally as well as nationally?

Jari: Yes.

Saunders: If yes, what are the differences between working on national as opposed to international exhibitions?

Jari: There is an absolute difference in professionality, such as packing for instance, here there is such a lack of care over works, also there is less respect for works, for instance in the U.K even wall spaces are carefully measured, also lighting is well thought out and labelling is well informed, this does not occur here.

Saunders: Some critics such as Nicodemus have suggested that there is a lack of qualified and experienced African curators resulting in a predominance of Western curators working on exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West. What is your opinion?

Jari: Is it all about qualifications? I think it is more to do with funding and interest, or lack or it, so-called pioneer expatriate African curators still exclude, so who is ever qualified?

Saunders: What could be done to improve this situation?

Jari: Raising awareness is a big problem to overcome in Nigeria.. Money is still not available if there is nothing in it for the potential investors. There is a need for a new type of investor, local entrepreneurs for instance.

Saunders: Do you feel that African curators currently living and working in the West are answering problems of misrepresentation?

Jari: No. As always they select works from the Diaspora and are not representative of what is going on here. Works from Africa can be accommodated into international shows if the curator is good, they should present artists as they are.

Saunders: Do you think African curators in the West are bringing African culture into the mainstream?

Jari: No, as l said there is a Diasporic orientation, and these artists are not representative of Africa.

Saunders: In appreciation of the current debate, who do you feel is best equipped to present African art in the West?

Jari: Anyone who lives in Africa, but not Africans in the West.

Saunders: How do you see the future of the exhibition of contemporary African art?

Jari: The future is rather bleak unless there is significant change, funder's and organisers must come to Africa and work with Africans.

Saunders: How can the current situation nationally and internationally be improved?

Jari: It is all a question of funding, for example the National Gallery of Art must be better organised, now it is still dealing with money pulling names alone.

Saunders: How can art educators encourage these changes?

Jari: They can do much, but must do things in hand with government policy. Art education should become compulsory for an increased awareness and appreciation of art within Nigeria to develop.

Appendix II Completed Questionnaires

Bisi Silva 25 April 2003

Saunders: Have you curated exhibitions of contemporary African art in Nigeria, or elsewhere in Africa? If not, why not? If yes, what do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art in Africa?

Silva: No, l am interested in curating exhibitions that have an international dimension.

Saunders: When did you first start to curate exhibitions of contemporary Africa art in the West? Did you experience any problems in first breaking into the international exhibitionary circuit?

Silva: Not applicable.

Saunders: What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art outside of Africa?

Silva: Most of the time contemporary African art presented outside of Africa is done in non-mainstream museums and galleries. When properly presented there are many advantages of which exposure, invitations for workshops and residences and the cross fertilisation of ideas among African artists and the it counterparts.

Saunders: Whose values and tastes influence your selection criteria? How does your location affect this criteria?

Silva: As someone who has lived and studied in Europe but travelled widely l would say that my values and tastes are internationalist but heavily influenced by my African and European heritage.

Saunders: What do you feel are the main advantages and disadvantages of African curators organising exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West?

Silva: Advantages include proper gallery space. Few if any African country , even South Africa, are blessed with the kind of spaces available in Europe, the US or Asia, or the kind of budgets that are spent on presenting art. Where an African curator has access to these assets it is a wonderful educational and intellectual experience. However, few African curators living on the continent have this opportunity, whilst more African curators who live in the West do, i.e Enwezor, Oguibe, Hassan. There are no female African curators that l know of living in the West or in Africa except for the Paris based Senegalese Ngone Fall.

Chika Okeke 29 April 2003

Saunders: Have you curated exhibitions of contemporary African art in Nigeria, or elsewhere in Africa? If not, why not? If yes, what do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art in Africa?

Okeke: I have curated quite a few: a) Uche Okeke Retrospective at the Goethe Institut, Lagos (1993); b) Nigerian Section of the First Johannesburg Biennale (1995); c) Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London and Malmo Konsthall, Malmo, Sweden (1995-1996); d) The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994 at Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, Haus der Kulturen der Welt/Martin Gropiusbau, Berlin, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and PS1/MOMA, New York (2001-2002). Then l served as guest co-curator (with Jerry Buhari) for Zaria Art Society, A New Consciousness at Kashim Ibrahim Library, ABU, Zaria, organised by the National Gallery of Art (1998). I left the project late 1997.

Advantages and disadvantages? Well, the most obvious advantage, is that ideally you want your show seen by its most immediate, relevant spectatorship, that is you want your show seen by its "home" audience who, we assume, would be sympathetic to the ideas, issues, subjects, etc the work or show is speaking to. This doesn't always happen though. Yet, one always expects that the audience identifies with (by which l mean negatively or positively, but all the same passionately responds to your show. The milieu in which the work is embedded is the best place to get such a response. As fro disadvantages, there are many, the two most important having to do with structural problems. There is no standard gallery or museum space with requisite institutional structures in Nigeria. This makes it nearly impossible to organise or even travel ambitious shows with loaned works from reputable collections. The usual practice (as was the case with my Okeke Retrospective) is to borrow works from the artists, but where, as is often the case, the more interesting works are in foreign collections (someone like Akolo is an example), you would be forced to do make do with what you can find locally - which is a terrible thing. The problem here is that not only is Nigeria regarded with anxiety and suspicion by foreign institutions, its art galleries and national gallery do not have well fitted gallery spaces and knowledgeable manpower to handle important works with substantial insurance premiums. During the curation of The Short Century, we had plans of travelling the show to at least three African venues. But after fact-checking and consultations, the only space that could accommodate the show on the continent was the South African National Gallery (that arrangement fell through eventually due to funding problems). So in the end, the show, regarded by many to be the most important modern African art show, could not be seen in Africa. It was most regrettable, but it highlights the difficulty of curating serious shows on the continent. South Africa, Egypt, Senegal, Zimbabwe have fared much better than Nigeria, and that is why they have had important shows of work from their countries and beyond.

Saunders: When did you first start to curate exhibitions of contemporary Africa art in the West? Did you experience any problems in first breaking into the international exhibitionary circuit?

Okeke: 1995. I think there's no one international exhibitionary circuit now;there are many circuits. The question is to what extent is the material l am interested in represented in the international arena. Gains are being made, especially since the work we started doing at Nka in 1994. More work needs to be done. It is worrisome that none of the patriarchs/matriarchs of Nigerian art has had a solo show in a major contemporary or modern art museum, with an accompanying monograph. El Anatsui's coming show at the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian will arguably be the first. This is where l want to divert some of my attention as a curator.

Saunders: What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art outside of Africa?

Okeke: The advantage is that you have access to proper institutional facilities and funding to organise shows. Research is made easier due to the better communication and library resources in museums and universities, as well as in public or private art collections. Because a significant amount of these works are outside it is easier to get access to and borrow them (for instance, when l was working on The Short Century, l had access to the nearly forty paintings by Akinola Lasekan at the Hampton University Art Museum; l doubt that that would have been possible if l was in Nigeria). In other words, you have the opportunity to do well-researched shows that make profound contributions to the art history of Africa. On the other hand, the major disadvantage has to do with the feeling sometimes that the audience here can be completely dumb, or overly patronising, yet disconnected from the issues, ideas and problems the shows broach.

Saunders: Whose values and tastes influence your selection criteria? How does your location affect this criteria?

Okeke: The curator must consider the location of a show for a number of reasons, some ideological some simply pragmatic, or scholarly. For instance, we could not

have organised a show as complex as The Short Century if we were planning to present it in Nigeria; it would have had to be a much more modest, therefore completely different show. Second, in presenting the show to an audience that had very little knowledge of the major issues addressed - colonialism, decolonisation, African political independence etc - the show had to find a way of telling that story without being didactic to this audience. Whereas you would assume that if it had happened in Nigeria/Africa where the audience should be familiar with the issues, the material chosen, or the manner of presentation would have been different. Thus, in making the arguments for a show, the curator often frames it in a way that is meaningful to the receiving audience. Third, curating directly and indirectly affects and is affected by scholarship within the discursive field. It would be interesting for one to curate a show looking at the interaction between Negritude and Surrealism (as Okwui Enwezor is doing presently) but such a show might not be appreciated in Nigeria where neither movement had any serious impact. Or, if l am to curate a show of the Art Society, Zaria in the US or Europe, l will not be looking at their work in isolation (as the NGA show did) from what was happening elsewhere on the continent, or indeed in the rest of the colonised world. In other words, my perspective will be more global, rather than local, for that is the only way the subject would draw the interest of non-Nigerian scholarship or spectatorship. That is the only way to situate the work and the artist's experience in the global culture of imperialism and the profound impact of decolonisation on 20th century culture and politics.

Saunders: What do you feel are the main advantages and disadvantages of African curators organising exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West?

Okeke: Is this different from question 3?

Saunders: What more do you think could be done in the future to encourage a more honest representation of African art works internationally? Do you think enough is being done by expatriate African curators to promote artists living and working in Africa?

Okeke: I do not know what you mean by "honest". You can speak about shows that are informative, inclusive, exclusive, weak, strong, but certainly not honest. The question of representing African art and artists internationally depends on what the intention is. Is it as public relations - to show international audiences that Africans are smart, art-making people and not monkeys living on trees; to show that Africans engage in honest endeavours and not just all 419ers, would-be dictators, and corrupt, drug-pedlers organised in tribes and always at war? If so, then the job is for national governments to build cultural centres or councils - equivalents of the British Council, Goethe Institut, etc - in foreign lands where they can hold exhibitions of national artists who express the values Nigeria stands for (like the USIA did with Abstract Expressionists during the cold war, as Serge Goblet and later scholarship have proven). If it is just about doing the business of art, then there must be national institutions - museums and galleries - mandated and encouraged to serve as depositories, research centres and exhibition spaces for Nigerian art. Of course we have the NGA, but it is anything but the kind of functional institution l am talking about. Second, there must be independent and institutional donors WITHIN [respondent's emphasis] Nigeria. Such shows could then travel internationally. That way, you get to dictate or at least actively participate in directing exhibitionary trends and scholarship on the subject. A nation that depends on shows paid for by foreigners cannot be in a position to argue about how it is represented in these shows. As for the curator, his/her problems do not always synchronise with those of Nigerians seeking "proper" or "inclusive" representation. (I have addressed this issue at length in my chapter titled "Myths of Representation or Realities of Presentation: Notes on Curating Nigerian Art" in Simon Ottenberg's new book, 2002 (the edited volume from the Smithsonian Institution Conference on Nigerian Art in 1997).

Sylvester Ogbechie 17 June 2003

Saunders: Have you curated exhibitions of contemporary African art in Nigeria, or elsewhere in Africa? If not, why not? If yes, what do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art in Africa?

Ogbechie: Yes, l have curated exhibitions in Nigeria, New York, Washington DC and Germany but not elsewhere in Africa. I have however done curatorial consultation for exhibitions in South Africa, Washington DC, London and elsewhere. The main advantages of presenting African art in Africa (l practices in this manner from 1987 to 1993) is that the art exhibitions l presented in Nigeria spoke to local conditions of life and situated themselves within a search for national or regional visual languages. International exhibitions on the other hand, removed attention from local African issues and judge African artists by the standards of local issues in places like New York or London. Hence, when you see a contemporary American artist who does, for example, Landscape painting, American critics see his work as illustrating a universal paradigm of ideals of landscape art. On the other hand, when an African contemporary artist does landscape (take the Yaba school of Nigeria as an example) they are seen to be producing parochial and outdated forms of visual representation. This entrenches a persistent double standard in art criticism and exhibition production that denigrates African creativity in relation to European practice. Another disadvantage is that when l worked as a curator in Nigeria, l produced exhibitions that were expensive by local standards but cheap by international standards (see for example, my Enwonwu retrospective in 1991 and the Third Nsukka Printmaking workshop of the same year, shown in Lagos and Bayreuth). Each of these shows had small catalogues and costs much less than comparable exhibitions will cost to produce in the United States.

The main disadvantage of presenting art exhibitions in Africa is that most African countries are lacking in fundamental resources and thus cannot and do not provide the kinds of resources necessary for producing good art exhibitions. In these contexts and contrary to any pronouncements by different national governments (Nigeria is most

notorious for making such pronouncements and not backing them up with any significant finances) arts are not in the top priority of their aspirations. Paradoxically, contemporary art of different inclinations flourish in Nigeria but most of these operate within the context of "popular" arts and its contexts of practice (airport art, open market merchandising, sign painting etc). Academic art falls through the cracks because its habitus calls for set discourses and protocols of exhibition in gallery spaces. Another factor that is important here is that much of the discourse of contemporary African art in the West focuses on African artists that live and work in the West. This discourse further marginalizes continental Africans fits into a wider global world-view in which Africans produce domination and art. This world-view that sees Africans as lesser beings date back to the slave trade and the attendant racist discourses thereby engendered. It remains resilient and limits the ability of Africans to control or even participate in discourses about their own practices.

Saunders: When did you first start to curate exhibitions of contemporary Africa art in the West? Did you experience any problems in first breaking into the international exhibitionary circuit?

Ogbechie: I first started curating exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West when a show of prints that l helped organise from the Third Nsukka workshop travelled to Bayreuth in Germany. I was very central to the production of the Nsukka school paradigm with its exhibitions and critical practice. When l came to the United States in 1993, l began to work on other shows in association with other curators. I was co-curator for an exhibition at Skoto Gallery in New York and put together a solo exhibition of my art works at Evanston, Illinois. I also did curatorial consultation for the inaugural exhibition of contemporary African art at the Sylvia Williams gallery of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African art in 1997. In 1998, l worked on the Worldspace exhibition in Washington DC.

I did not experience any major problems in breaking into the international exhibition circuit because l no provide curatorial consultation for African art exhibitions

internationally. It is however true that there is a difficulty in breaking into the international exhibitions circuit because Western curators tend to see African curators as lesser beings. Hopefully, Enwezor's Documenta 11 of 2002 invalidates that perception.

Saunders: What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art outside of Africa?

Ogbechie: The main advantages are greater visibility for contemporary African art and artists but as l said earlier, the artists who enjoy this visibility mostly live and work in the West and therefore can be best described as representing themselves rather than Africa. The Western reception of contemporary African art has initiated a situation in which continental African artists and their contexts of practice continue to remain invisible in the discourse. The main disadvantage of this is thus that there is much talk about contemporary African art at the same time that actual focus on events and art practices in Africa dwindles to a trivial trickle.

Saunders: Whose values and tastes influence your selection criteria? How does your location affect this criteria?

Ogbechie: My initial exhibitions were influenced by the historical and contextual needs of the artists l worked on. In Nigeria, this meant that l focused on what contemporary Nigerian artists bring to the international discourse of art practice. I thus selected artists whose works extend this discourse. Since l came to the United States, l have been influenced by the international trend of contemporary art and its exhibition strategies. I am however a reactionary and l have consistently criticised the homogenisation of aesthetics engendered by the Biennale circuit. Please refer to my article in African Art for reprise of these arguments.

My location in the USA affects my selection criteria because those who fund art exhibitions here have preconceived idea of what they want to see. I have basically limited my curatorial practice because l continue to argue for evaluating contemporary African art by the intention of the artists who produce it rather than those of the

audience who views it in the West. However, a quick check of the "contemporary African artists" included in the last major Biennials shows that the same names are being recycled for those exhibitions. Who do these artists speak for and how does their success impact on the struggle to make continental African artists more visible?

Saunders: What do you feel are the main advantages and disadvantages of African curators organising exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West?

Ogbechie: The meaning of this question is unclear. Please reframe.

Saunders: What more do you think could be done in the future to encourage a more honest representation of African art works internationally? Do you think enough is being done by expatriate African curators to promote artists living and working in Africa?

Ogbechie: We can hope for a more nuanced interpretation of contemporary African art that takes the activities of a wide range of Africans into consideration in both African and international contexts.

There is not enough being done by expatriate curators to promote African artists living and working in Africa. These artists are no longer their principal constituency. Expatriate curators now focus mainly on African artists who live and work in the West. We may contest their choices and discursive orientation but we also have to be aware that their location as expatriate critics implicates them in the power relations they have with those who fund their curatorial practice (museums etc). These fund providers dictate what is presented in their name and use their power as patrons to redirect attention away from Africa. All in all, Africans will get a better deal in international discourse commensurate to the power of African countries. Since African countries are by and large powerless economically and politically, l should live so long to see that day when exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West become balanced, nuanced and sympathetic to the practice of continental Africans. We as critics will continue to rail against the marginalization of continental African but

this is all essentially a moot point. It is what it is and for the meantime, there is nothing that can be done about it.

Olu Oguibe 14 July 2003

Saunders: Have you curated exhibitions of contemporary African art in Nigeria, or elsewhere in Africa? If not, why not? If yes, what do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art in Africa?

Oguibe: It is important to mention that one curates contemporary art, not simply contemporary African art. I have not curated in Africa, for no particular reason other than l only curate on invitation, and so far l have not been invited to curate in Africa. This will change with the inception of the Biennial of Luanda which takes off in Angola in 2005 and for which l have been invited to work as the curator from the Americas. In that capacity l will be curating contemporary art from the Americas, not contemporary African art.

Saunders: When did you first start to curate exhibitions of contemporary Africa art in the West? Did you experience any problems in first breaking into the international exhibitionary circuit?

Oguibe: Officially in 1994 with the exhibition,Seen/Unseen at the Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, England. I do not recall any problems "breaking into" any circuit. At any rate, l never was interested in breaking into the "exhibitionary circuit" as a curator since l am really first and foremost, an artist and do not particularly care for or hold the curatorial profession in high regard. When l first was invited to the Bluecoat to curate Seen/Unseen in 1994, l specifically requested not to be credited as a curator and was consequently credited as a collaborator.

Saunders: What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of presenting African art outside of Africa?

Oguibe: I don't know if there are advantages and disadvantages. The challenges are different, certainly, but one is not sure there are advantages and disadvantages. By the way, it is just as problematic to theorise presenting African art within Africa as it is to

think of presenting African art outside of Africa, even if the circumstances differ, for the very reason that Africa is South Africa as well as Egypt, and one is not sure what "African art" means in this context. One cannot afford to oversimplify either African art or Africa. Presenting contemporary art from Nigeria in Egypt or South Africa seems to me just as complicated and challenging as presenting contemporary art from Nigeria in Germany. It is hard to see the difference.

Saunders: Whose values and tastes influence your selection criteria? How does your location affect this criteria?

Oguibe: The point of this question is not clear, but it is possible to guess. One has written about this in contributions to the curators' discussion in the book, Fresh Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture (Phaidon, 2000), as well as the essay, "The Curator's Calling" in Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art (Independent Curators International, 2001). Curatorial criteria are determined by context and must speak to the purpose of the curatorial project or exhibition, or what is often referred to as the concept or in some instances, the agenda of the exhibition or project. Every curatorial venture is a proposition just as every exhibition is a thesis, and the curatorial choices must substantiate or uphold the proposition or thesis. There is, of course, a whole array of other rather technical criteria that a curator must apply in order to create a successful exhibition. Some of these l discuss briefly in "The Curator's Calling". Sometimes a curator is no more than an impresario, a horse-trader, or a window-dresser, and each of these contexts or circumstances decide what taste or set of values they honour. One has written rather critically about curators that pander to one set of values or another, but that in itself is a value judgment that has its own context. There is certainly nothing wrong with a curator at an art fair seeking to attract collectors or patrons by taking their tastes into consideration. Issues arise only when the agenda are questionable, diabolical, or inimical to the art, the artists, or the culture or society that produced them.

Saunders: What do you feel are the main advantages and disadvantages of African curators organising exhibitions of contemporary African art in the West?

Oguibe: The question advances dichotomy that does not apply to real life. One has argued that culture is best articulated by those who produce, live, and experience it. To that extent it could equally be argued that African curators bring a level of affinity and understanding of contemporary African art that may not be obtained with Western curators. However, it does not follow that everyone who lives and experiences a culture is able to articulate it. In other words, there is nothing to suggest that every African curator can stage a good or successful exhibition of contemporary African art, or that an outsider invariably cannot. Not so long ago there was a belief, also, that African curators bring an invariably less questionable agenda to the presentation of contemporary African art in the West, but that suggestion is now proven to be grossly mistaken. Since the year 2000 there has been a string of exhibitions in the West that show that African curators are just as capable of using contemporary African art to advance agenda that could be considered problematic. What can be said with all certainty is that the longstanding practice of uninformed, often mediocre or downright inane Western curators electing to curate contemporary African art suggests that it is easy to curate, which it is not, or that African curators are incapable of doing the job, which is again inaccurate. One addresses these and other issues in the letter on African curators and the Sao Paulo Biennial.

Saunders: What more do you think could be done in the future to encourage a more honest representation of African art works internationally? Do you think enough is being done by expatriate African curators to promote artists living and working in Africa?

Oguibe: To the last question one could answer in the affirmative, given the difficult circumstances under which the very few curators who fall in that category work at present. Obviously some of them are driven by career motives, which is understandable, and some feel no particular obligation to artists living and working in Africa. Again that is a valid position because a curator owes nothing to anyone other than his or her passion or motivation. Artists and curators living and working in Africa have a responsibility, if they so choose, to work mutually towards promoting

cultural production where it matters most, which is in their respective locales. Europe or the West should have nothing to do with it.

Appendix III Time Schedules for National Interviews

Appendix IV Bibliography of Exhibition Catalogues

Amoda, O (Oct, 2002) *The Unilever International Schools Art Project* National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Anatsui, E (May, 2001) *New Energies* Mydrim Gallery and The Nimbus Art Centre, Lagos.

Bardi, A (June, 2000) *Beauty Around Us* Oba Akenzua II Cultural Complex, Benin City.

Filani, K (July, 1993) *On and On* Federal College of Education, Akoka, Lagos.

Filani, K (May, 1996) *Folklore Exhibition* The National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Filani, K (Oct, 1997) *Patterns of Ona* Nimbus Gallery, Lagos.

Filani, K (Nov, 1999) *Our Environment* Federal College of Education, Akoka, Lagos.

Filani, K (April, 2000) *Best of Ife: In the New Millennium Till Eternity* National Museum, Lagos.

Filani, K (Sept, 2002) *Best Of Ife* Goethe Institut, Lagos.

Ikpakronyi, S (April, 1999) *Impressions and Expressions* National Theatre, Lagos.

Ikpakronyi, S (1999) *39th Independence Anniversary Exhibition* The National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Ikpakronyi, S (Sept, 2000) *Theresa Luck-Akinwale, A Fine Art Exhibition: Portraits of Distinguished Personalities* The National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Ikpakronyi, S (Sept, 2002)*Rhythms of Fulfilment* The National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Ikpakronyi, S (July, 2002) *Millennium Inaugural Exhibition: Filling the Pot Holes* National War Museum, Umuahia.

Imonikebe, M (June, 1999) *Benin City Art Exhibitions: Reversing the Trend for the 21st Century* Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Benin.

Imonikebe, M (Dec, 2000) *Towards a Lasting Peace in the Niger Delta II* Shell Club, Warri.

Imonikebe, M (April, 2002) *Benin City Art Exhibitions: Reversing the Trend for the 21st Century* Oba Akenzua II Cultural Complex, Benin City.

Ikwuemesi, K (Nov, 1996) *The Nude Figure Never Sleeps* The Russian Cultural Centre, Lagos.

Ikwuemesi, K (Nov, 1996 and Feb, 1997) *Songs for Idoto* National Museum, Enugu and Didi Museum, Lagos.

Ikwuemesi, K (Aug 1998) *Take These Chains from My Heart* Heavensgate, Enugu.

Ikwuemesi, K (May, 1998) *Orchids and Songs* Heavensgate, Enugu.

Ikwuemesi, K (August, 2000) *Crossroads: Africa in the Twilight* National Museum, Enugu and Didi Museum, Lagos.

Ikwuemesi, K (Sept, 2001) *Visual Orchestra* The Nimbus Art Centre, Lagos.

Ikwuemesi, K (Jan, 2001) *Footprints: an exhibition of the Fine and Applied Arts Students of the University of Nigeria* Ana Gallery, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Ikwuemesi, K (April, 2002) *Footprints: New Painters from Nsukka* National Museum, Enugu.

Jari, J (Sept, 1992) *Exposure: An Exhibition of Art and Design* British Council, Kaduna.

Jari, J (Sept, 1995) *Jimo Akolo at 60: A Retrospective Exhibition* National Gallery, Lagos.

Jari, J (May, 1997) *Exposition* Alliance Francaise, Kaduna.

Jari, J (1998) *Accident and Design: Gani Odotukon and his Influences,* School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Jibunoh, E (April, 1986 and May 1986) *AKA: Inaugural Exhibition of AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artists* French Centre, Enugu, and Franco-German Exhibition Hall, Lagos.

Jibunoh, E (April, May, and June 1988) *AKA: 3rd Annual Exhibition* NUJ Press Centre, Enugu, Institute of African Studies, Nsukka, and the National Gallery of Crafts and Design, Lagos.

Jibunoh, E (April, 1989, and June, 1989) *AKA: 4th Annual Exhibition* Hotel Presidential, Enugu, and the National Gallery of Crafts and Design, Lagos.

Jibunoh, E (May, 1996) *AKA: 11th Annual Exhibition* Bona Gallery, Enugu, and Signature Gallery, Lagos.

Omoighe, M (Nov, 1999) *Amos Tutuola Show* Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos.

Omoighe, M (2000) *Agbarha Otor 3rd Harmattan Workshop: Art and Environment* Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos.

Omoighe, M (2002) *Man And Society* National Gallery of Art, Lagos.

Appendix V Visual Sponsorship in Nigeria

Appendix VI Profiles of Participating International Curators

Ogbechie, Sylvester is presently in the employ of the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, U.S.A, as an assistant professor of art history. Ogbechie has contributed to the satellite project "WorldSpace" by organising an associated art exhibition "Earthhues: The World Space Art Initiatives in an Exhibition of Contemporary African Art, and as a critic speaks regularly on the position of African artists both based in Africa and the Diaspora.

Oguibe, Olu has lectured at the Universities of London, Chicago and Florida and is an editor for Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art. Oguibe has worked closely with both Okwui Enwezor and Salah Hassan, providing theoretical research for many of their exhibitionary projects, and often developing associated seminars. Perhaps one of Oguibes greatest contributions to the exhibition of African art to date is: Authentic/Ex-centric: Africa in and Out of Africa, Venice (Italy).

Okeke, Chika is presently in the employ of Emory University, U.S.A, as an art history scholar. Okeke has become increasingly visible as an international curator since the role of co-curator of Seven Stories About Modern African Art , Whitechapel Art Gallery (London). More recently Okeke has engaged in projects directed by Okwui Enwezor, such as the Lagos platform, one of several platforms organised as debate forums in the development of Documenta XI, Kassel (Germany) and the exhibition The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994 hosted by Museum Villa Stock, Munich and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (Germany), and also Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (United States of America).

Silva, Bisi is currently experimenting with digital communication technology as a tool for the promotion of contemporary African art, and further as a means of dialogue between African artists, critics and curators working in Africa and the Diaspora. Silva has critiqued several art exhibitions, most importantly the season of African arts, africa95, based in London throughout 1995.

