THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PAINTERS IN NIGERIA

BY

DR. SOTONYE ALLEN ORUBU
Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Humanities
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
allensotonye@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria is a country blessed with men and women of rich artistic potential. Over the years they have used different artistic mediums like painting among others to contribute towards the development of our country. Unfortunately, most of the painters in Nigeria who have contributed the towards the development of the country through their arts (Painting) has not been given their due recognition and patronage for them to have the convention that the practice of painting can earn them a source of livelihood. This negative situation has made upcoming painters ignore the practice of "Painting" as a career in the country the truth is if nothing is done fast soon we may have very little or no one interested in studying art vis-a-vis painting. Thus, this paper is designed to express the contributions of painting and painters towards nation-building. Discuss the challenges confronting painters in Nigeria that are hindering them from contributing effectively towards building the Nigerian nation. The paper in proffering remedies to the challenges confronting painters in the country outlined some of the contributions of painters in the country. The paper concludes by recommending that Nigeria should appreciate and patronize their painters as a way of encouraging them to produce works that will help them not only to improve their living standards and creativity but also contribute meaningfully to nation-building.

Keywords: Country, Perspective, Nigeria, Painting and Nation

Introduction

A country simply put is a distinct geographic region that is recognized as a separate political entity with its own government, economy, laws, and culture. It is typically defined by borders or boundaries and often has its own system of governance, currency, and language. Countries can vary in size from very small to vast in land area, and they are often recognized as independent and sovereign in the international community. Each country also has its unique history, traditions, and customs that contribute to its identity. Jones (1964:14) states that a country is a distinct part of the world, such as a state, nation, or other political entity. It may be a sovereign state or makeup one part of a larger state.

The worlddata.info (2022) points out there are several, often ambiguous definitions of what a "country" or a "state" is. However, the concept of a country is never the same as that of a sovereign state. Depending on the definition, a country may already be a federal state or another political administrative unit. A country is a spatially clearly delimited area, in which its own administration with at least partial autonomy comes to bear, which emanates from an organization exercising power. This administration does not have to be politically independent or even uninfluenced from the outside. A federal state has fixed borders, its own administration and even its own taxes, but is dependent on the superior state object. Even states that are actually considered sovereign are often dependent on others in economic or even political terms. The recognition of a territory as a sovereign state is done by the member countries of the United Nations. However, these do not jointly recognize or reject a state. Each member state has the right to decide this for itself. Thus, if one speaks of countries, it must first be settled how to define these territories independently of political interests or interests under international law.

Considering the definitions and assertion of what makes a country it is obvious that Nigeria is a country be it is made up of different tribes, ethnic groups and most importantly, a defined

geographical location in Africa. Notably, one unique feature which have contributed in creating cultural identity for the country Nigeria is its artworks. Painting is one such artwork that has over the years helped to promote the cultural values of the people. But, unfortunately despite the contribution of painting in promoting the cultural heritage of the country it has suffered the challenge of lack of patronage, neglect, and rejection.

Ochigbo (2011) while discussing the concept of painting opines that it is the practice of applying paint, pigment, colour, or other medium to a surface (support). Ochigbo also points out that the application of medium i.e. commonly applied to the base with a brush, but other objects can be used. Painting simply put can be described as the expression of ideas and emotions, with the creation of certain aesthetic qualities, in a two-dimensional visual language. The elements of this language its shapes, lines, colours, tones, and textures are used in various ways to produce sensations of volume, space, movement, and light on a flat surface. These elements are combined into expressive patterns in order to represent real or supernatural phenomena, to interpret a narrative theme, or to create wholly abstract visual relationships. An artist's decision to use a particular medium, such as tempera, fresco, oil, acrylic, watercolour or other water-based paints, ink, gouache, encaustic, or casein, as well as the choice of a particular form, such as mural, easel, panel, miniature, manuscript illumination, scroll, screen or fan, panorama, or any of a variety of modern forms, is based on the sensuous qualities and the expressive possibilities and limitations of those options. The choices of the medium and the form, as well as the artist's own technique, combine to realize a unique visual image (Britainnica, 2022). Banjoko (2000) while also discussing painting states that painting by classification falls under fine art and is also two-dimensional. And it involves the use of colour or paints to express creative ideas on board, canvas or wall through drawings, picture making or imaginative compositions.

Painting has played a significant role in the development of a country like Nigeria in various ways. First and foremost, painting understandably is a form of visual art that can serve as a powerful medium for expressing cultural identity, historical narratives, and societal values. This can help foster a sense of national pride and unity among citizens. Additionally, the presence of vibrant and diverse painting scenes has largely contributed to the overall cultural and artistic enrichment of a country like Nigeria. Such artworks can attract tourists, promote cultural exchange, and create economic opportunities for artists and related industries. Moreover, paintings often serve as a reflection of the social and political climate of a country, providing a platform for artists to express their opinions and advocate for change. This has contributed towards societal awareness and dialogue, potentially leading to positive advancements in social issues. Overall, the role of painting as an artwork in developing a country is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, economic, and social dimensions, and contributing to the overall enrichment and advancement of the nation.

Unfortunately, in this era of post-independence painters have suffered several challenges that impede them from practicing their art optimally; some of the challenges the post-independence painter faces are lack of recognition and support, Infrastructure and resources such as limited access to art materials, studio spaces, and exhibition venues. Also, market opportunities is seriously not certain as Post-independence painters face difficulties in accessing a robust and sustainable market for their artwork, impacting their ability to earn a living from their creative endeavours among others. Fortunately, it is believed that Nigerians and their leaders are privileged to have the right awareness of the contributions of painting as an art practice towards the development of their country.

What is a Country

A country is a nation with its own government, occupying a particular territory. districts and small settlements outside large urban areas or the capital. In English the word has increasingly become associated with political divisions, so that one sense, associated with the indefinite article "a country" is now frequently applied as a synonym for a state or a former sovereign state. It may also be used as a synonym for "nation" (Greety, 1997).

A country is a land that is controlled by a single government. Countries are also called nations, states, or nation-states. Countries can be large or small. Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Russia, and the United States are large countries spread over millions of square miles. The world's smallest country, Vatican City, covers less than 1 square mile (2.6 square kilometers). A country's land does not have to be connected. For example, the U.S. states of Alaska and Hawaii are separated from the other 48 states but are still part of the country. Some countries are made up of groups of islands. Indonesia and the Philippines are examples of island countries.

Most countries are divided into smaller parts called states or provinces. A state or province has its own government. The country's government shares power with the state or provincial governments. The laws made by the country's government affect all the people of the country. The laws made by a state or provincial government affect only the people of that state or province. Almost all countries belong to an organization called the United Nations, or the UN. The UN tries to solve disagreements between countries peacefully. It meets in New York City.

A country is one of the political units which the world is divided into, covering a particular area of land. The people who live in a particular country can be referred to as the country (Collins Dictionary, 2022). Collins (2022) adds that a country is a territory distinguished by its people,

culture, language, geography, etc. It is an area of land distinguished by its political autonomy; state, territory or state. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2022) A country is an area of land that has its government, army etc.

The discourse in this paper which focus is on the challenges and prospects of the post-independence painter in Nigeria. The context in which the paper is discussing a country is the constitution of a country in terms of its art vis-sa-vis culture. It is obvious that every country have its own unique art and culture and they play very significant role bridging the gap of cultural identification. Every country possesses there unique art that distinguishes them as a country. This implies that the art or artworks of a country contributes towards the development of a country. Because the artworks of the helps the create avenue for people to recall the existence of the country.

Post Independence Painter in Nigeria

Post-independence refers to the period after a nation has gained its independence from a colonial power or achieved self-governance. It is a crucial phase in a country's history as it involves shaping the destiny of a newly independent nation and building strong foundations for its development. During the post-independence period, countries often face numerous challenges including political, social, economic, and cultural transformations. These challenges vary widely based on the specific context and circumstances of each nation. Some common themes, however, can be observed in many post-independence scenarios. These challenges of post post-independence scenario have been affecting our country Nigeria since it gained independence from the British, the country has faced several challenges. The Nigerian art partitioners like painters are not exceptional to the challenges because the hike in price of materials and other challenges also affect their practice.

Political developments play a central role in the post-independence era. This includes the

establishment of new governments, the drafting of constitutions, and the creation of governance structures. The aim is to promote democracy, establish the rule of law, and ensure political stability. Often, this period involves the transition from colonial rule to an independent government, which requires building institutions and systems to uphold these democratic principles.

Social changes are another important aspect of the post-independence phase. These changes often involve addressing historical injustices, healing wounds inflicted during the struggle for independence, and promoting social cohesion and inclusivity. Efforts are made to foster unity among diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups within the nation. Additionally, there is a focus on improving access to education, healthcare, and basic services for all citizens. Economically, post-independence nations strive to achieve economic independence and sustainable development.

This often involves formulating and implementing economic policies that promote industrialization, job creation, and poverty reduction. Governments may also work towards reducing dependence on former colonial powers and fostering regional or international trade partnerships. Culturally, post-independence nations aim to preserve and celebrate their unique heritage while embracing modernity. This often involves promoting indigenous languages, traditions, art, and literature. National pride and identity are reinforced through cultural activities and events, which contribute to a sense of unity and belonging among the population. The post-independence period is a critical time for a country to define its path and make choices that will shape its future. It requires visionary leadership, inclusive governance, and active participation from citizens. It is an opportunity to overcome past challenges, heal divisions, and

work towards a prosperous, just, and equitable society. The post-independence period has presented both challenges and prospects for painters in Nigeria.

Challenges and Prospect of the Post-Independence Painter in Nigeria

Painting means creating a picture with paints, it is also the act of applying paint to a surface (vocabulary.com, 2024). Painting is the expression of ideas and emotions, with the creation of certain aesthetic qualities, in a two-dimensional visual language. The elements of this language its shapes, lines, colours, tones, and textures are used in various ways to produce sensations of volume, space, movement, and light on a flat surface. These elements are combined into expressive patterns in order to represent real or supernatural phenomena, to interpret a narrative theme, or to create wholly abstract visual relationships. An artist's decision to use a particular medium, such as tempera, fresco, oil, acrylic, watercolour or other water-based paints, ink, gouache, encaustic, or casein, as well as the choice of a particular form, such as mural, easel, panel, miniature, manuscript illumination, scroll, screen or fan, panorama, or any of a variety of modern forms, is based on the sensuous qualities and the expressive possibilities and limitations of those options. The choices of the medium and the form, as well as the artist's own technique, combine to realize a unique visual image (Britannia.com, 2021). Some of the images that are produced depict and represents valuable cultural heritages; and also expresses some issues that educate the public on issues that they have no knowledge. Unfortunately, In Nigeria as a country despite the contribution of painting as an art practice that contribute to society it has not been treated nor given attention like some other practice in the science. This situation is indeed hindering the practice.

In bit to create more understanding of what painting is Omuaru (2002) opines that painting was discovered long ago and found in the caves of early men. Omuaru further defines it as the application of colour on support that represents one's concept, objects or scenes. This implies that

painting has exited long time ago, but has continued to face several challenges that has hampered it effective practice and acceptance in our society. Some of the challenges noticed are economic, socio-cultural, and religious beliefs among others. Also, for more clarity Lumen (2021) states that painting is the application of pigments to a support surface that establishes an image, design or decoration. In art, the term "painting" describes both the act and the result. Most painting is created with pigment in liquid form and applied with a brush Painting media are extremely versatile because they can be applied to many different surfaces (called supports) including paper, wood, canvas, plaster, clay, lacquer, and concrete. Because paint is usually applied in a liquid or semi-liquid state it can soak into porous support material, which can, over time, weaken and damage it. To prevent this support is usually first covered with a ground, a mixture of binder and chalk that, when dry, creates a non-porous layer between the support and the painted surface. A typical ground is gesso. According to Study.com (2021) Painting is an art form made through the application of paint, color, or pigments to a medium or surface. Deducing from the definitions and assertions made concerning the meaning of painting it is obvious that painting is simply the application of pigment on a surface to depict images, issues, and objects among others.

The Nigerian post-independence artist's vis a vis the Nigeria painters no doubt have suffered a lot in having the enabling and conducive environment to practice effectively in our society. Nzoiwu (2018) points out that the Nigerian environment is a challenging one. Ranging from the fluctuating economic policies to the incessant political upheavals; from the endemic corruption to the increasing incapacity of the political class to chart a direction for the rest of the governed; from constant civil unrest to the larger diabolic violence emanating from different armed groups; from the lack of social amenities to the institutionalized instability and mediocrity that have come to

define the educational institutions and the rest of national institutions, one needs to be endowed with a double charge of life to live under these circumstances. The Nigerian artist, like other professionals, faces the above-mentioned problems and struggles to make a livelihood. Nzoiwu (2018) adds that the capacity to survive may vary from artist to artist and sometimes may depend on the location in which the artist resides and works. In other words, what may pose a challenge to one artist in one location may not be so for another artist in another location. The challenges range from the availability of affordable art materials for the artist to execute his works to the presentation and marketing technique. One can also cite the unwillingness of the artist to adapt to changes even as the world has been reduced to a global village (Nzoiwu, 2018)

One of the most fundamental impediments to a viable art practice in Nigeria is the inability of an artist to acquire the necessary art materials needed to pursue a purposeful practice-based career. Art materials are a pre-requisite for an artist to express himself; therefore their import cannot be over-emphasized. An artist without art materials is regrettably handicapped as these materials constitute the tools with which an artist expresses him/herself. However, the high cost of good art materials in Nigeria poses a great challenge to the artist.

Another very big challenge confronting the post-independence painter has to do with the unpredictable hike in the price of painting materials. The high cost of art materials has a multiplier effect as this translates to the cost of the artworks. Artists find out that in most cases the product is not sold or on the other hand if sold after a long period, there is no value for money previously spent. As the artist is part of the society that the economy is weighing down on, he has to be calculative. Post-independence painters face difficulties in accessing a robust and sustainable

market for their artwork, impacting their ability to earn a living from their creative endeavors.

Another notable challenge is the challenge of lack of materials to produce paintings. This situation affects painter adversely because without painting materials they will not be able to produce paintings. According to Orubu (2012) unavailability of art materials affects the production of artists whose painters are part of our society. Avae (1990) also states the unavailability of materials and functional studios is a hindrance to painters in this post-independence era.

It has become notable that most of the challenges confronting the post-independence painters in Nigeria is the challenge of hike in the cost of painting materials, which has become unpredictable due to the present economic situation Nigerians have found themselves in.

The challenges painters face in buying imported pigment to produce their paintings have become a serious concern to painters in our country today. This is because pigment is very expensive to buy and, in some cases, very difficult to find. Thus, it has made some studio-practicing painters jettison practicing painting and go into other professions. Interestingly, some who are very interested in practicing as painters in some cases have resorted to improvising pigment with different available waste. Obat (2023) also points out that the cost of art materials, studio space, and exhibition fees can be prohibitively high, hindering artists from fully realizing their creative potential. The lack of financial support and patronage exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for artists to sustain themselves solely through their art.

It is interesting to note that lack of patronage is also another challenge painters are faced with in this post-independence era of Nigeria. There is also the challenge of religious interference and influence which makes their believers not patronize some artworks or paintings that depict cultural

values because they conceive them to be fetish. This act is grossly affecting the patronage of the post-independence painters in Nigeria.

Overall, while there are challenges to be addressed, there are also significant prospects for post-independence painters in Nigeria to contribute to the country's cultural, artistic, and economic development. Efforts to address the challenges and leverage the prospects can help create a supportive environment for the growth and success of Nigerian painters.

Interestingly despite the challenges painters of the post-independence era face, there is the prospect for them to achieve their goals and desires. One very unique and interesting aspect of it is that painters who are faced with the challenge of the hike in the price of painting materials in recent times improvise some of the needed materials to produce their paintings. For instance, painters improvise with alternatives to pigment with colour polythene, fabrics, and foils among others. Also, instead of using brushes painters improvise with brushes found waste objects from their environment; especially during this era when pigments and brushes were very expensive for painters.

Nigerian painters have the opportunity to explore and express the rich cultural heritage and diverse experiences of the country through their artwork, contributing to a vibrant and dynamic artistic landscape. Global Recognition: With the increased international interest in African art, there is a growing opportunity for Nigerian painters to gain global recognition and exposure for their work.

Conclusion

Nigeria is one of the countries that up the African continent. The country is blessed with so many art practitioners like painters, who have contributed to the promotion of painting as an art practice in Nigeria. Unfortunately, it is not without challenges some of the major challenges experienced

are the cost of art materials, studio space, and exhibition fees can be prohibitively high, hindering artists from fully realizing their creative potential. The lack of financial support and patronage exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for artists to sustain themselves solely through their art vis-a-vis painting.

It is interesting to note that lack of patronage is also another challenge painters are faced with in this post-independence era of Nigeria. There is also the challenge of religious interference and influence which makes their believers not patronize some artworks or paintings that depict cultural values because they conceive them to be fetish. This act is grossly affecting the patronage of the post-independence painters in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, it is believed that there is prospect despite the challenges confronting painting as an art practice in Nigeria's post-independence era because if painters are encouraged and motivated to improvise some painting materials like paints or pigments and other materials it will help to proffer solutions to the hike in the price of painting materials. Also, while researching on the paper it, it reveals that the lack of patronage level of people in Nigeria in patronizing painters and their works is a very big challenge, this is because with good patronage some of the financial challenges faced by the post-independence painters can be averted. Also, when they are well patronized it will help to spur painters to produce more paintings that will help to beautify our homes and environment. Importantly, it will help to document our culture, tradition, and history among others.

Recommendations

The paper having discussed the challenges and prospects devilling the effective and efficient practice of painting by post-independence painters, makes the following recommendations:

a. Due to the hike in the price of painting materials in this post-independence era of art practice painters should be innovative and explore by improvising other materials in place of the actual materials to produce paintings.

b. The art lovers and Nigerian general should try to patronize painters as a way of encouraging them to produce more paintings that will contribute to our society.

c. To also avert the challenges painters face government and well-meaning Nigerians should try and sponsor their exhibitions as a way of encouraging them.

References

Avea, D. (1990). *The essentials of Junior Secondary School Certificate art Nigeria*./do.do.umeh publishers Ltd.

Banjoko .A. (2000). *Visual art made easy for Junior Secondary Schools*. Lagos, Nigeria. Movic publishing company limited.

Britanmica (2022). Painting *https://www.britanmica:com/art/painting* Accessed 10th April, 2022

Britannica. Dictionary (2023) country *https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/country/391002* Accessed 11th April, 2023

Collins dictionary (2022). Country *https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/country*

Combridge dictionary (2022). Country *https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/country*. Retrieved 11th March, 2022.

Geerty, C (1997). "*What is a country if it is not a Nation?"* The brown Journal of World affairs 4(2)235-247

Jones, J. (1964). "*What makes a country human event*". 24(31):14

Lumen (2021) Painting. *Lumenlearning.com/atd-sac-art/appreciation/chapter/reading/-painting*. 20th April, 2022.

Nzoiara, A.A. (2018). The Nigerian Artist and the challenges of sustaining practice based career pursuit in a hostile church. Mgbakoigba, Journal of African Studies. Vol.7. No. 2. June, 2018

Ochigbo, S.B. (2011). *A lexicon of Art Terminologies*. Lagos: Minder international

Omuaru, G.T.C (2011). *Ground work of Visual Art*. A source book. Ibadan. Hope publications.

Orubu, S.A. (2012). *Availability/utilization of fine art studio in Nigerian Secondary Schools*: Significance, challenges in enhancing teaching, learning and practice of fine art. Journal of vocational education and technology (Jovet) Vol.9.No:1&2

Study.com (2021). What is painting? Definition, Evolution and major artist. *https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-painting-definition-evolution-major-artist*. Html Accessed 10th April, 2022

Vocabulary. (com, 2022) painting. https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/painting. Accessed 10th April, 2022

Worlddata.info(2022) what is a country. *https://www.worlddata.info/definition-country.php* Accessed 10th April, 2022