SHOWING THE ENLARGED SCOPE OF ART HISTORY TO THE STUDENTS: AN AVENUE OF INVESTIGATION INTO NEW IDEAS IN ART HISTORY.

By

ELENWO MORRISON (PhD)
Department of Find and Applied Arts
Faculty of Humanities,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni,
P.M.B 5047, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria
Email; Morrision.elenow@iaue.edu.ng
+234863394606

Abstract

This paper "Showing the Enlarged Scope of Art History to the Students: an Avenue of Investigation into New Ideas in Art History" is set out to express that the Scope of art history has been enlarged and a good number of art history students in Nigerian art schools are still ignorant of the enlargement. This situation becomes outrageous when the art history students cannot choose project topics from those additional branches of art history. Axiomatically, unveiling those new branches of art history to the students would have exposed them to the eighth trend in the development of art history. The study aims to document and preserve those additional branches of art history, with the view of creating the awareness to the art history students. The objective of the study is to analyze the major trends in the development of art history. Consequently, the study can bring forth various uses of the scope of art history as project topics. The research adopts the historical survey technique of qualitative research methods and relies on the secondary sources of data collection as methodology. Related literatures were reviewed. The scope of the study was delimited to the use of the additional branches of art history for students' project topics. The study ascertained that the additional branches of art history are contained in the history of the major trends in the development of art history. It therefore proffered recommendations that include accessibility of the article to the public, preservation, and creating awareness. The study concludes that the enlargement of the scope of art history is useful to the discipline as it will enable the students to be vast in the knowledge of art history to solve artistic problems. So also does it reveals the enlarged scope of art history to include; the use of theories in art historical analysis, the biographies of the traditional and contemporary world artists, analyzing the computer-generated images, and the performance art.

Keywords: Showing Enlarged Scope of Art History, Art History Students, Avenue of Investigation, New Ideas in Art History, Major Trends, and Development of Art History.

Introduction:

In Nigeria, the ignorant of the art history students about the enlargement of the scope of art history has caused some setback in the productions of variety of projects, dissertation, and thesis of inspiring topics by the students. Funny enough, the students project still revolve around the pre and post colonial Western and Nigerian artists, including a few of Nigerian cultural practices which do not supply the needed amount of art history information to the art industry. El Anatisui, in Oloidi (2004) notes that the art historians or art schools in Nigerian should re-focus their research interest in order to rectify the situation of studying Nigerian artists as well as meet up with the level and quantity of creative art output. Furthermore, no nation can survive socio-culturally without the proper documentation of her various historical experiences. No art tradition can thrive dynamically if it i t historically preserved, and no professional artist

can find himself on the focus of history if his entire creative process is not looked at art historically. Nigeria is overwhelmingly rich in art professionals and teeming with modern artistic or creative events. As such, modern art traditions need full academic and intellectual attention of not only the art historians but also art scholars as regards proper and serious documentation and study. Okpara (2004) also observed that some art text books are now obsolete while others are not available in Nigeria; as such scholars should strive to writing indigenous text books, and projects the efforts of some Nigerian scholars. Elenwo (2019) holds that studying Nigerian arts and artists in recent times confronts Nigerian intellectuals with considerable overlap in such issues as who they are, what they do, how they do it, and what quality of work is produced. The above observations cannot be achieved if the students are not exposed to the appropriate branches of knowledge that will enable them to contribute to knowledge. This explains the necessity for analyzing the major trends in the development of art history, and consequent revealing of the enlarged scope of art history to the students. The researcher therefore was stimulated by the neglect of those aspects of study to address the issue of "enlarged scope of art history as an avenue of investigation into new ideas in art history". This topic consists of the merging of words to convey the meaning of the concept. These words are discussed separately in conceptual clarification, and as a leading concept, it is described as the unveiling of the unrecognized branches of art history that are subsumed in the history of the major trends in the development of art history. Unveiling the major trends in the development of art history seems to mean that something meaningful could be found in it. Therefore the need for the analysis of the major trends in the development of art history becomes obvious.

Conceptual Clarification:

Showing; as used in this context is the act of drawing people's attention to something. The Enlarged Scope refers to the aspects of human knowledge that have been included into the art history areas of study. While Art History is the school subject that deals with the study of history of art. The Avenue of Investigation refers to the way of getting information about the current happenings in art history. A new idea in art history means the most recent discovery in the study of history of art. Major trends are the basic changes that occurred in a situation. Art history Students refers to the learners of the history of art. While Development of Art History refers to the gradual growth of the study of history of art. Opportunities are the chances one has to own things. Project Topics are students' subjects' matter of interest that are studied carefully over a given period of time, written, and approved to be preserved for use in the present times and posterity. Choosing; in this context refers to making a decision, while meaningful is something that is acceptable for use. The entire topic therefore is described as directing the art history students to the additional areas of art history where acceptable concepts for project topics can be found.

Theoretical Framework:

The paper examines the "Enlargement of the Scope of Art History as an Avenue of Investigation into New Ideas in Art History". It is guided by the theory of deconstruction that notes that something new could be derived from examining a document or situation - a reason for which the theory is pertinent to this study. The theory holds that meaning is an unstable phenomenon. It premises on the assumption that, questioning the ideas of the past may generate new opinions. Meaning involves discovering, recognizing, and understanding the underlying, unspoken, and implicit assumption, ideas and frameworks of works of art. The theory seeks to open up new meanings through questioning and assumption of the deep seated contradictions in a work of art. Wikipedia describes the theory as a turn away from Platonism's idea of true forms and essences which are valued above appearances. The research was carried out to reveal the aspects of knowledge that add to the scope of art history. The theory of deconstruction allowed the researcher to investigate the old and current documents on art historical issues. Findings proved that the history of the major trends in the development of art history contains some aspects of human knowledge that have been included in the scope of art history. Hence, the analysis of the major trends in the development of art history becomes imperative.

The Major Trends in the Development of Art History

The major trends in the growth of art History in African Art schools began from the historical documentation of the life and creative works of the first set of human artists referred in this study to as the cave artists or Paleolithic or ancient artists of the stone age or pre-historic era. This documentation marked the beginning of the progressive recording of the works of art for art historical analysis in the world, including Africa and Nigeria respectively. Those documentations portrayed the cave artists as wandering hunters that made use of stones as tools of operations. Their creative works function in the context of spirituality, religious, leadership, cultural, economic and aesthetic needs round the world. This development gave rise to the *second trend* in the growth of art history that sought to discover and transform the basic symbols of the ancient European, African, and Asian arts respectively. This was the medieval or Mesolithic or the pre-renaissance era of the Stone Age, that made some advancement in the tool making and hunting activities that enhanced their living. The artists of the period are referred to as "the Neo-traditionalists or post ancient artists of the stone Age. This development also gave rise to another era of civilization referred to as the "renaissance" which influenced and overlapped the medieval age. The renaissance period was the *third trend* in the growth of art history in European history. Getlein (2002), notes that, it was the period when Italian thinkers introduced modern cultural practices in opposition to European traditional influences on the Europeans as a process of civilization. This implies that the Italian thinkers began to reject the traditional practices of the Europeans that they felt were obsolete and should be transformed for the betterment of the future. This period was between the 14th and 16th Centuries within which modern life came into being. (Walford, 1945)

In Africa, the renaissance period of the western world could be likened to the advent of the Portuguese (European) and consequent introduction of modern art to the African artists including Nigerians in about the 15th century. Today, the people of those periods are generally referred to as "the modernists", while their artists are referred to as "the African renaissance artists, or the traditionally inspired modern artists. This period is still of the third trend in the growth of art history in African art schools. Their creative expressions were similar, and different from one another in the pattern of form, subject matters, creative processes and meaning. They were trained through informal apprenticeship system, but contributed immensely to the development and understanding of art through aesthetic language. Mangiri (2014) describes aesthetic as the study of knowing and having information about art works and using such knowledge for making careful sensitive observations, thoughtful interpretations and judgments. Aesthetics can succinctly be defined as the study of beauty with the consideration of its nature of pleasurable and non-pleasurable qualities. Elenwo, (2019) views aesthetic language as visual language. He describes it as the ability of an artist or group of artists to evolve a special way of expressing art for which their works can be identified in the midst of others. Those artists who went through apprenticeship system prior to the establishment of European art in Africa, Nigeria specifically also produced a wide variety of artistic works that function in the context of leadership, cultural, economic, and aesthetic needs, (Okronkwo, 2012). These artists tap into African folklore, myths, symbols, and signs in order to evolve their visual language. According to history, their art concepts particularly Nigerian creative works were tied to many aspects of life as the works were used in varied ways including spiritual or religious matters. Their styles of work show the diversity in Nigerian ethnic groups but appear to have been made and used for a particular cultural ceremony. Those styles of art are referred in this study to as "the trado modern expression." The next category of artists that were influenced by the works of the renaissance artists and were proficient in the use of western art tools, materials, and techniques, and experimented with new forms, media and idioms using indigenous concepts to create African art wo could have global appeal, are referred in this

study to as “the modernist, or the African renaissance artists”. These artists constitute *the fourth trend* in the growth of art history in African art schools. They were individualistic in art productions, and interested in discovering new things for themselves. That period is synonymous with the introduction of Christianity and Islamic religions in Nigeria. Their works reflected more of indigenous and foreign concepts as evidence of the cross cultural practice they have had. Egonwa (2011) categorized those artists into four groups referred to as “the true, or advant gard modern African artists, the college trained artists, the schools of artists, and the highly individualistic experimentalists”. This set of artists were also influenced by another category of artists that sought to produce “the key African cultural specifics” otherwise referred to as “ the unique African art works” that were needed in contemporary art market of the time, for various end uses.

In Nigeria, the author refers to this category of artists as “the post modernists” or the post African renaissance artists. Although they may be called different names by other African writers, but one common characteristic of them is that, they have better European art training and skill, and constitute the *fifth trend* in the growth of art history in Africa. Those artists adapted western techniques and styles in expressing the African cultural heritage of their respective nations and tribes. Among them was late chief Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) of Nigeria, often referred to as the father of contemporary Nigerian art. Their works reflected the combination of unique African and Western cultural concepts as shown in plates 1 and 2. Fortunately, the unique art works made by those artists served as a platform for the education of new generation artists in Africa. The exhibitions and publications made by African artists proved that modern art has been established in Africa including Nigeria. Those artists have transmitted their ideas of art expressions to the artists of new generations in Africa. In Nigeria for example they have transmitted to the pre - Nigeria independence artists, through formal education. This period marks the *sixth trend* in the growth of art history in Africa. It dates back to 1920 of the 20th century, when late Chief Aina Onabolu was identified as a talented Nigerian artist by Nigerian colonial masters, and was sponsored by them to receive formal art training in England. This advantage perhaps was also enjoyed by the artists of other African nations.

Gainfully, the return of Onabolu after graduation gave rise to the formal art studio practices and teaching of art in Nigerian schools. So also does experimental art workshop centers were established by the missionaries, and some Nigerian artists to enable the indigenous Nigerian artists to be trained in the Western styles of art productions. Those establishments gave rise to the formal training of the early breed of Nigerian artists and their creative works which include Justus Akeredolu (1915-1984), Akinola lasekan (1916-1972), Benedict Chuka Enwonwu (1921-1994), Bruce Onobrakpeya (b.1932), Uche Okeke (1933-2016) Yusuf Grillo (b.1934), Jimoh Akolo (b. 1934), Demas Nwoko (b.1935), and Simon O. Okeke, (b. 1937) among others. These artists are exposed to better art resources than ever and have had varieties of ideals, styles and techniques of producing art which also contributes to the present creative forms in Nigeria. They have also evolved new and peculiar creative styles that are worthy of recognition in Nigeria and elsewhere. Those artists seem to be individualistic, innovative and inventive in art productions, and compete favorably with any other artist on the globe. They have contributed so much to the growth and development of modern Nigerian art nationally and internationally. Other sets of artists of the same pre-Nigeria independence period that were interested in adapting to the dynamic forces of change, and produced conceptual works that reflected modern art idioms reinvented on traditional art style as shown in plates 3 and 4 emerged. Those artists constitute the *seventh trend* in the development of art history. Their works were influenced by the skill of their European masters, African philosophy and spirituality. Notable am artists of the period are Prof.C.C. Aniakor

(b.1939) Chuka Amaefuna (1940-1994) Jimoh Buraimoh (b.1943) and Obiora Udechukwu (b.1946) the quality and aesthetic values of the works of these artists gave rise to creative art in modern Nigeria.

Today, modern African artists particularly Nigerians have made efforts at all levels of African educational system to revive and sustain new art ideas in creative productions, in order to reflect their creative identity in the 21st century. They appreciate the artistic forms and styles of other cultures in addition to their own in order to broaden their creative horizons. This development has transformed African artists into producing works with indigenous themes, materials, and techniques to promoting good insight into modern art. African artists have re-imaged art which perhaps led to the establishment of many art schools in west Africa particularly Nigeria. The recent inclusion of the use of theories in art history for art historical analysis, the analysis of the biographies of the traditional and contemporary world artists, the analysis of the computer generated images, and the analysis of the performance art, to the areas of assessment in the typology, function and aesthetics of art, enlarged the scope of art history due to the quest for globalization of technological advancement. This era is referred in this study to as "the globalized computer and technological advancement era, and constitute the *eighth trend* in the growth of art history. In the foregoing analysis, one deduces that the enlarged scope of art history is profitable to the students, and the society, and can be found in the history of the major trends in the development of art history.

Plates

works showing the combination of unique African (Nigerian) and western cultural concept,



Plate1: Uche Okeke, moma/ Nza the Smart Source: Chukueggu C.C. (1998)



plate2: Uche Okeke,march of the masquerades (1982) source: internet

Works showing modern art idioms reinvented on Nigerian traditional art styles,



Plate 3: Aniakor C.C . Archive Interventions Source: Internet



plate 4: Jimoh Buraimoh Turbare Source: Internet

Recommendations:

1. This paper if considered publishable and is published, should be preserved for use in the present times and posterity.
2. Art history teachers should encourage their students to be acquainted with the facts of the scope of art history. This will enable them to be aware of the added branches to the scope of art history, and spur them to choose project topics from those parts.
3. This paper if considered publishable and is published, should be accessible to the public to enable the intellectuals take advantage of it and contribute meaningfully to the development of their respective disciplines.

Conclusion:

This paper has examined and discussed the ignorant of the art history students about the enlargement of the scope of art history as an avenue of investigation into new ideas in art history. It is apparent that the unawareness of the art history students about the inclusion of other branches of knowledge in art historical studies has being a barrier to the students in of choosing project topics from those aspects of knowledge. It is also clear that the act of globalizing technological advancement urshers development into disciplines such as art history for increased productivity. Art history is contributing immensely to all facets of development in nation building. Its impact is mostly felt in the context of culture, religious, leadership, spirituality, economic, and aesthetic needs round the world, and cannot be over emphasizes. The enlargement of its scope to serve the present and further needs of the people is obviously useful to the society. Therefore, the paper submits that the study is not only imperative to the art history students, but the world at large.

References

1. Adejumo, A. (2007) *Visual Art in Nigeria: historical Evidence, Western Interpretation and Contemporary Practice, Revisiting History Through the Arts-Layiwola* Tales Press
2. Castellote, J. (2012) *Contemporary Nigerian Art in Lagos Private Collection; New Trees in Old Forest.* Ibdan – Nigeria, Book Craft
3. Egonwa, O.D. (2011) *Nigerian Art: Introductory notes, Sango – Ibadan and Abraka – Delta State.* Ababa Press Ltd and Gosay Publishers
4. Elenwo, M. (2019) Encouraging Creative Individualism and Visual Language Development in Nigerian Art productions via Okasuosa's Creative Philosophy, *Port Harcourt Journal of History and Diplomatic Studies (PJHDS) vol. 6 no 4, Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,-Rumudument –Port Harcourt, P. 164.*
5. Elenwo, M. (2024) life and Detail Art Styles of the Intellectual African Artists: An Example of Biographical Analysis of a post Nigeria independence Artists, Tobenna Okwuosa, *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), 7(1)*
6. Gentlein, M. (2002) *Gilberts Living With Art* (16TH Ed), Mc Graw – Higher Education
7. Mangiri, S.G (2014) Relevance of Aesthetic Value in Home Economics: in Icheke: IAUOE Port Harcourt, Nigerian, *Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, P.2 -3*
8. Okpara, A.U. (2004). *Conceptual approach to the philosophy of art. AMAMIHE journal of applied philosophy,* 2, 13-14
9. Oloidi (2004 ed.) *Modern Nigerian Art in Historical Perspective, Art Historical Association of Nigeria (AHAN), Ogui Enugu,* Benak Press, p.vi
10. Study. Com > learn > lesson > ja

11. Walford, E.J. (1954) *Grat Themes in Art,* Bud therien
12. Wikipedia
13. Www. Tate. Org. UK > art > art – terms