

**THE REJECTED STONE:
VISUAL ARTS IN AN
ARTISTICALLY
UNINFORMED NIGERIAN
SOCIETY**

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Introduction

Long before I was recommended by my Faculty for professorship in 1986/1987 session, I had revered, with scholastic enthusiasm, the tradition of Inaugural Lecture, and hoped, very awaityngly, for the day that professorship would give me the opportunity to deliver one. This ended up being a deflated hope, when the scientifically cultured, creatively crafted and very locally manufactured tradition of “Pyramid” emerged to stagnate the upliftment of many academics at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

After waiting for about 9 years for the “Pyramid” to be relocated to its natural base in Egypt, I drafted a letter in 1995 which was to be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Oleka Udeala. The letter was requesting for the exhumation of the Inaugural Lecture in the University. The draft was with me when I saw Professor A.O. Animalu at the “Newspaper Stand” near the Princess Alexandra Auditorium. When I told him about my intention, without uttering a word, he went to his car and brought me a letter to read. As if we had been thinking together, the letter requested the Vice-Chancellor to, please, begin the process of starting Inaugural Lectures in the University.

Professor Animalu, in his letter, told the Vice-Chancellor that he was ready to be the first to deliver this lecture. He also indicated his inaugural topic. Unfortunately, Professor Animalu’s request could not be met, and therefore his intention was frustrated. This was because, that month, the University of Nigeria’s problem, which prematurely terminated Udeala’s Vice-Chancellorship began. My ambitious dream was also suffocated. I am, however, happy today that what would

have taken place over a decade, or more, ago is now, in God's time, a reality. This is why I am now standing before this congregation, for the glorious and well cherished cult of academic elitism, to address the theme, "The Rejected Stone: Visual Arts in an Artistically uniformed Nigerian Society".

First Encounter With Art

My first encounter with art was during my early primary school days when I suddenly or naturally saw my father's "Note of Lesson", open and under preparation, on his table. What I saw were two art forms: one was a highly calligraphic writing, proficiently rendered in clean occidental cursive. It was around 7 p.m. Not that I checked at the time, but because my father had already had his dinner, and was in the nearby church with Rev. Father Lodgel who was in town to celebrate Mass the following day. My father, Alexander Dada Oloidi, popularly known as "A.D", was a teacher, headmaster and a catechist. I quickly rushed this Note of lesson to my mother to ask her why she was not writing like my father. My mother, instead of answering my question, and with a hurried whisper, told me to return the Note Book quickly because my father would be angry with me.

My attempt to quickly obey her motherly instruction made me accidentally drop the book, and an attempt to, also, hurriedly pick it up made me see other pages with illustrative drawings or visual aids. This was how I developed interest in looking at hand-drawn pictures while, in my own immature, crude and unconstrained way, I began to copy my father's cursive writing. This continued until I entered secondary school.

Dashed Hope: Secondary School Experience

In the secondary school, Annunciation School, Ikere-Ekiti, heavily populated with the Irish Reverend Fathers and other Irish and Australian expatriates, I was happy to see that art was in the school's programme and Latin which my father had started teaching me immediately I received my letter of admission. Nearly all of us in year one, even those who were not naturally talented, began to enjoy the teaching of art; it became moreso because we had a very dynamic, resolute and lovely art teacher in the person of Benedict I.C. Ijomah who was also one of our English teachers. We had our First Term holiday only to come back for Second Term to be told that art was no more part of the school's curriculum. The school had developed a bellicose attitude to this subject, without the students knowing that the school's action had its etiology rooted in the societal uninformed art ignorance. We never had art lessons for our six-year duration in secondary school. Mr. B.I.C. Ijomah later at the end of our first year left our school for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to be one of the foundation members. He also became the foundation President of the Students Union Government. After receiving his Ph.D. in the U.S.A., he came back to Nigeria and eventually became a Professor of Sociology.

Civil Service Brutality and Divine Intervention

After my secondary education, I secured an appointment as a Third Class Clerk in the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Research, Lagos. For the three months that I stayed at home before securing an appointment, I was practising art to make money without

any art training except my god-given talent. My jobless colleagues envied me positively for this. Immediately I assumed duty, and from my first salary, I registered for my G.C.E Advanced Level with the Rapid Results College, London. They were sending me lessons in History, Government and English Literature every two weeks. I also subscribed for the monthly journal, the Psychological Abstracts in London to further excite my academic pursuit. I never had the intention of pursuing art that already seemed to be septic to people's appreciation and knowledge. The thought never came to me because I had not been brought up to know the value of art to anything; which was why I also had in apathetic attitude to it. However, at my own free time, I always drew something without anybody teaching me, at least to be ablutionary to my informally serviced creativity.

It was one of these drawing exercises that I was carrying out in the office, while waiting, usually, for my day's duty to start. That is, being in charge of filing letters which were always in their hundreds, I had to wait, every morning, for at least one hour, for the File Searchers to bring bundles of files to my table. It was one of these free periods that I used to draw a portrait of one Mr. Omah, from the present Delta State. Omah was a student of Law, Univesity of Lagos, on a summer job in our department. Our Head of Records, Mr. Awolaja, saw me accidentally with my drawing and seized it. According to him, I was engaging in a useless exercise on duty. Among his plethora of abuse, he referred to me as Oluya, which ordinarily and sincerely should mean, in Yoruba, a person who draws. By linguistic implication, the same word, Oluya, among the Yoruba, generally, also means a good-for-nothing person, a

suffer head or one under an extreme poverty. He meant the latter interpretation.

A query that immediately followed read, using the government General Order (G.O.): “Mr. M. Ola Oloidi, can you please explain, for the information of the Director, the reason why disciplinary action should not be taken against you, for making useless drawing at an official time You are given three days to respond to this query”. I answered the query the same day, but I was not bold enough to let him know that he himself used to play Pool or read newspapers every morning, for about two hours, before facing the day’s job. To other people’s surprise, the seized drawing was attached to the answer to the query and forwarded with my file straight to the overall Director, now designated Director General. Seeing his action, all the smooth-flowing biological systems in me temporarily became congealed. People began to wonder what a young boy had done to somebody who was already a grandfather. But those working with him knew his history of high handedness. The man was waiting for a punitive result from the Director, while I was also expecting the worst. Meanwhile, he continued to attack me with a deluge of annoying and discouraging words to weaken any possible art ambition. He made me understand that I might eventually be a thief, if I thought that I could make anything good out of art.

After about a week, Awolaja was getting worried that the Director had not called me for questioning. He was not bold enough to complain loudly because he himself feared the Director. After one week, the Director sent a messenger to call me. I immediately became petrified with fear as I went to his office without hope of survival, but

with the expectation that the Director would not only punish me accordingly but would also be stereotypical of the public's usually venomous concept of art. The punishment for my action, according to administrative convention could be any of these three: stoppage of salary increment for three to six mouths or one year; transfer to one of the Ministry's departments in far away Northern Nigeria and dismissal, particularly for a junior staff that had not been confirmed.

Entering the office of a high and revered Executive by a young boy, like me, made all possible sensations in me cease. The unbearable condition of his freezing aircondition added to my corporal torture. As I greeted him with utmost respect if not servile attitude, I received no answer. Rather, he was busy looking at my file, and I could see my drawing of Mr. Omah. Then suddenly, a question came from the Director: "Is this Mr. Omah, the AEO Records?" I answered with a weak and trembling "yes". He asked me another question: "What career do you want to pursue.?" Having psychologically acquired more confidence, I told him that I was already reading for my G.C.E. Advance Level in History, Government and English Literature. "Why not Art?", he said. I responded with composure that I did not take Art in the secondary school.

He immediately picked up his telephone and, to my surprise, called the Registrar, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, and asked him about the admission requirement for art. He was told by the Registrar, that it was a W.A.S.C or Grade Two certificate which must include English plus submitted art works that showed a student's art talent. Unfortunately, he was told that application forms had closed a month earlier. The Director told him that he should

please make one available for one of his staff, and with a note from him, I collected the form and eventually became an art student in the college. Very unbelievably, no reference was made to the query before him. I later heard, from Mr. Onyeuke, our Accountant, from Nimo, that the Director later called Mr. Awolaja and advised him to be gentle and patient with young employees.

Rejection of Art: Colonial and Christian Factors

The history of reprehensive and deriding societal attitude to art goes to the beginning of colonialism. The British colonizers who could not understand the artistically cultural and conceptually symbolic nature of Nigeria's traditional art easily concluded that the Nigerian traditional artists totally and naturally lacked the creativity to produce art like a white man. The British also naturally had a problem, by measuring the artistic philosophy and ideology of Nigeria with a European apparatus.¹ It was believed that an African traditional artist could only produce art with "raw crudeness, a lack of refinement and artistic perception".² Not only that, according to Sir High Clifford, the Governor of Gold Coast (Ghana):

The East African Negro has often been reproached with his failure to develop any high form of civilization he has never sculpted a statue, painted a picture, produced a literature, or even invented any mechanical contrivance worthy of the name, all of which are perfectly true.³

What the above reaction implied was that, Europe did not consider the image, wood and terra-cotta sculptures, produced by the Nigerian traditional artists as art, since the traditional art of Nigeria, and therefore Africa, and that of Europe were not stylistically congruent. But the formalistic or physical dispositions of Nigeria's traditional art continued to haunt the obstinate conclusion of colonial administration. The Education Department also believed that "there is one barrier he (an African or Nigerian) cannot surmount, one door he (an African) is unable to open; that in the sphere of art (Western type) he is not capable of reaching even a moderate degree of proficiency".⁴

This creatively blemishing impression continued unabated: "teaching an African the art of a white man was not only a waste of time but also a misplaced value ... for even if he has a moderate ability for this, he can only succeed in creating the tribal art of his people."⁵ The colonial and racially induced tirade seemed to be acquiring more fallacious elasticity; for to the colonial administration in Lagos, "the ability to appreciate a work of art does not reside with the African personality" because "rather than impose on them (Nigerians) what will end up being a torturing load, head, they can be taught some aspects of European crafts which will be useful to various missions in the colony".⁶ What the European administrators, scholars and anthropologists could not understand at that time was the culturally unique, potent and conceptually fertile nature of the Nigerian traditional art.

For example, while the European artists rigidly believed in undistorted but perfect representation of nature, through photographic capturing or depiction of their art subjects, African traditional artists believed in the opposite.

For, theirs was total distortion or abstraction, reorganization, representation, interpretation, symbolization and intellectual conceptualization of their subjects. That is, while the European artist's philosophy of creation promoted art that was photographic in appearance, the African ideology of art was antagonistic to any art production that was naturalistic or photographic. While the European artist merely represented or reproduced what he saw, externalization of subject, the African artist interpreted what he felt, internalization, the inward essence, of his subject.

The European artist focused on physical body, but the African artist focused on the spirituality enclosed by the body. Europe concentrated on physical beauty, Africa was pre-occupied with moral beauty or character. The African ideology of art is strongly reflected in the byword of the Yoruba, that physical beauty without moral beauty or good character is not beauty but vanity. One can now understand why the African, therefore the Nigerian, traditional artist made their art images disobey all the rules of the European art; without formal proportion, symmetry, semblance and morphological detail. The traditional African artists were "creators" of art, bringing into physical reality what had not been; while the European artists were "makers" of art, producing, repeating and imitating what was already there. These, among others, were what the colonial administration in Nigeria did not understand before their indictment of Africa and proclamation of European artistic superiority.

However, as the colonial administrators were contriving chimerical reasons to demean, with atmost racial disrespect, the unique and natural creativity of the African, Christianity instantly became a surrogate in this apparent

attempt to wrestle with and knock out all African art characters. If the colonial approach was merely abusively expressive and culturally degrading, that of Christianity was fanatically oppressive, caustic and destructive. The Christian missionaries did not spare anything that could possibly hinder smooth and undisturbed evangelization. Traditional African art images, which they considered “wretched, irritating and grotesque woods”, were burnt or broken down into pieces.⁷ The Nigerian Christian adherents compounded the problems for the Nigerian traditional artists and priests because of their uncompromising fanatical approach to the suppression of various cultural activities, particularly the production and use of art images.

In 1934, the C.M.S. Church in Esa Oka, a Yoruba town, gave the leader of the Church congregation the power to excommunicate any member found possessing art images considered to be idols. In 1933 at Agba, in the old Western province, a Roman Catholic Priest preached to his congregation through A.D. Oloidi, the Catechist, as follows:

My predecessor has told me abundant stories about your hospitality, your hard work and your desire to release your young ones for training (school). I thank you for this I love this attitude of yours, but I do not love these graven images which, I have been told, occupy either your inner, dark rooms or backyards. These can separate you from the church and therefore from God.⁸

The areas greatly affected by Christian denouncement of image production and function were mainly in Southern Nigeria; particularly Onitsha, Uzuakoli,

Afikpo, Mbaise, Akwa, Nnewi, Bende, Owerri, Ohafia, Ikot Ekpene, Calabar and many other towns, all in Eastern Nigeria. In the Western Region were towns like Abeokuta, Ikorodu, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Agba, Esa Oke, Ilesha, Aramoko, Igede, Ado, Emure, Ikere, Ilawe, Owo, Idame, Ondo, Benin City, Agbor, among many others. The religious war on art seemed to be more fierce in the old Ekiti Division because of the resistance of some powerful religious groups.

In fact, throughout the colonial period, particularly between 1910 and 1950, the Nigerian traditionalists did not find it easy with the Christian missionaries who were bent on the total obliteration of all traditional practices in Southern Nigeria. Some traditionalists, on the other hand, refused to back down, seeing some actions of the Christian missionaries as too pontifically offending to their heritage. Many Nigerian missionaries were attacked for this reason. But Joseph Babalola, the founder of the Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C), from Ekiti, was able to finally stabilize his Church after “using his power of anointing” to neutralize, in the 1930s, the dauntless acrimonious actions of the Ekiti traditionalists.⁹

In Lagos, however, the Evangelist, Apalara, was not so lucky in his missionary efforts, mainly because of his very vocal and strongly instrumentalist approach to, or method of, preaching. Apalara, a highly itinerant preacher of the Gospel, particularly in the Lagos Colony, did not spare the traditionalists in his turbulent “language of power and fire” that became very razory and uncomfortable to some adherents of Yoruba traditions.¹⁰ Apalara paid with his life; he was murdered in Lagos by a group of these adherents. However, according to Jokotola Balogun of

Bariga, his death eventually brought victory to the Christian missionaries in Nigeria, and ended some cultic activities, because eleven of those who planned the murder of Apalara were hanged in Lagos by the colonial administration.¹¹

It is necessary to explain that many Nigerian Christians were very fanatical in their acceptance and propagation of Christianity in the colonial period. Many Nigerians got into trouble because of some, at times, incredible implicating reports they gave to their European missionaries particularly about the possession and or production of art images. Agu Dulu Chukwuegu's case was a very typical example. Chukwuegu, before his military service in Cold Coast (Ghana) during the Second World War, was a well known wood carver in his village, Ahiara Mbaise in the present Imo state of Nigeria. Because of his creativity in art, he was appointed a temporary Junior Teacher in Umuahia Catholic School on a salary of ten shillings (one Naira) a month.¹² As a teacher, he was also carving to make more money. He was a devout Roman Catholic.

Though he was not carving for any cult but for sale, some of his fellow teachers, church members and particularly his village people in Ahiara, were shocked at the type of images he was carving. Chukwuegu was criticized for producing idols, and his art works were openly abused and rejected by the entire Catholic populace. His Ahiara people were more aggressive. Samples of his works were taken to his Headmaster who was also infuriated by Chukwuegu's art. The Headmaster reported the artist to the Parish Priest, Reverend Father Bronny, at Ahiara. The Headmaster also took some of the carved

images seized from Chukwuegu to the Reverend Father who ordered that Chukwuegu should be brought to him.

The whole Catholic congregation, particularly some Ahiara people who requested for his dismissal, were shocked when Father Bronny acted contrary to their expectation. Bronny praised Chukwuegu's works and considered them products of creative and artistic excellence. People received more shock when the Reverend Father gave the artist an immediate permanent appointment to teach crafts not just in one but in three Catholic primary schools in Ahiara, his village that rejected him. But the shock became more shocking, not only to the Ahiara people but also to the Catholic Parish when Father Bronny not only doubled Chukwuegu's salary but also directed that the three schools should start providing the materials and equipment for both teaching and private practice of the artist, at the expense of the schools.

Being a Reverend who had given his edict and also a European for that matter, the whole Catholic community automatically had a complete turn-around in their attitude to art generally. The Ahiara community, and not only the Catholics, showed remorse for the actions earlier taken against Chukwuegu and began to promote his art career. He was eventually honoured with the Dulu, the Wizard of Art, the Great Art Talent of Mbaise, No wonder, he became known professionally all over Nigeria for his carved woods. In spite of Chukwuegu's experience, however, many were yet to be fully convinced that art was, in fact, a gainful profession for a successful future. But by the end of the 1940s, limited but prosperous changes began to be seen in the Christian and colonial attitude to art.

Christian and Colonial Penitence

Towards the end of the 1940s, some Catholic Reverend Fathers realized the damage which colonialism and Christian evangelism had done to the creative tradition of wood carving, particularly, in Ekiti Division of the old Ondo Province. Very surprisingly, the Catholic Diocese settled for penitency rather than adamancy in its attitude to and concept of wood images and other art forms in Ekiti, particularly. The church finally realized that not all the Ekiti, and therefore Yoruba, wood images were idols; that many of these figures served only political, social and aesthetic functions. The Catholic Church was therefore determined to make some Yoruba carvings part of its liturgy. But unlike the situation in Mbaise with Chukwuegu, many indigenous Catholics saw the apparent move as very noxious to Catholic dogma and became resolute in their opposition to their Mission's intention.

The people shifted their position to the side of their Reverend Fathers when they later learnt that the Papal Order from Rome had, about two decades earlier, provided and manured the ground for the implantation of the Father's' action. Pope Pius XII, in the third decade of the 20th century had instructed various Catholic Missions in Africa to stop the plethora of abuse of African heritage and, instead, embrace them with Christian rectitude; except the images that were still physically servicing local gods and vacuous deities.¹³

This new position of the Catholic Church made the Provincial Superior, Father Patrick Kelly, conceive the idea in 1946, of starting an art workshop or informal art school where the Yoruba traditional carvers would be able to practise their trade. The idea became concrete in 1947

when Kelly located the school at Oye-Ekiti with Father Kevin Carroll in charge as its moving spirit. Father Carroll invited Yoruba wood carvers, weavers, bead workers and others who were already proficient in various crafts. They were, in addition to producing works for Catholic Churches, encouraged to accept outside patronage. What was very interesting was that the carvers, like Lamidi Fakeye, who died in December 2009, Bamgboye and George Bamidele, and others were all indoctrinated not to carve like a European artist but to make the physical characters of their images look like those in their age-old Yoruba tradition, the stylistic characters that were initially unacceptable to and ridiculed by the colonial administrators.

Father Carroll was very emphatic and uncompromising in the above mandatory instruction to the invited wood carvers. In fact, one of the qualifying criteria for membership of the school was the ability to be purely traditional, and not European, in carving style. This was how the stylistic heritage of Yoruba art was given instant continuity. However, one must remember that this continuity was largely with Catholic face. Reverend Father Carroll knew that some of the initial members of the Oye art experiment were not Catholics or Christians because there were Muslims among them. He did not force any of them to be a Catholic. What he did was to make those Yoruba Catholics, like the catechists, and those versed in Biblical studies, narrate very exciting areas of the Bible to these traditional artists. Without any paper, pencil or chalk, the carvers would become told to interpret or carve those aspects of the Bible that they enjoyed in wood. This was how the Oye artists began to carve Christian subjects, but

with the entirely Yoruba body morphology, iconography and other traditional elements.

Within a short period, the Oye artists had become popular throughout the Western Region for the production of “Madonnas, crucifixes, Christmas cribs, figures of Saints, stations of the cross and church doors.”¹⁴ Before 1960, these carvers had produced hundreds of Christian and non-Christian subjects for the Catholic Church, government offices, Kings’ palaces, private houses, college or secondary school institutions and wealthy individuals. Works with Christian themes or subjects were particularly very exciting. For example, the Virgin Mary was portrayed as a Yoruba woman in traditional buba and wrapper. At times, she was given facial marks or carved, mounting baby Jesus at her back. One figure showed her pounding yam with well plaited hair when Angel Gabriel appeared to her. The apostles were made to wear either agbada, flowing gown, or Yoruba up-and-down. It was Christianization of African, Nigerian, or Yoruba traditions all the way.

The Oye School became so famous in Nigeria that the products of this informal school were exhibited in Ibadan. Very surprisingly, if not unbelievably, selected works of the school that had Christian themes were exhibited in Rome on the order of the Pope who, it was reported, took custody of some of these works. The Oye art episode, to some extent, changed the minds of many Nigerians positively to art before independence, but not yet to that level of allowing their children to make art a college discipline. Art was yet to be acceptable, though ignorantly, to the general public, despite the penitent action of a section of Christendom. But what about the colonial penitence?

In this lecture, it has been shown that the early colonial administration refused to see or accept the traditional art of Africa, or that of Nigeria, as art. Experiences showed that they would not have anything to do with this “art of the savages that daily controls their deadly witchcraft and other occultic activities.”¹⁵ Unknown to these colonialists, or probably known to them but because of their own colonial or exploitative interests, the traditional art of Africa, which they earlier scorned, had already been accepted by the Europeans, particularly the modern French, artists as “reasonable” as early as 1900.¹⁶ It was already seen as “the rule that corrects emotion”.¹⁷

All the notable artists who created modern art had already accepted that it was the cubical or the geometrical stylization of African traditional sculptures that inspired and therefore forced them to change from their European philosophy of naturalism or photographic realism to African philosophy of abstraction in art. The artists were Pablo Picasso who was the embodiment of modern art, Maurice Vlaminck, Andre Derain, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse, among others. Thus, by the 1920s, African traditional art had totally defaced and changed the European concept and execution of art and it remained like that till today. With the African art gene already injected into the artistic system or heritage of Europe, modern art, or European art, began to experience periodical, imperishable stylistic changes which eventually affected global artistic practices. The more the changes, the more African character these changes acquired. These changes still continue unabated.

However, between 1930 and 1960, and in addition to the above new dimension that African art had taken

artistically, the art had dominated the academic, intellectual, economic, educational, domestic and social lives of Europe and America. Academically, various universities had instituted African Studies Centres and departmental programmes to study African art and culture; and students were being awarded B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the course. Intellectually, workshops, conferences, seminars and symposia abounded, particularly in the United States of America (U.S.A.), Europe and Germany for scholars to gather composite knowledge from African art for their literate citizens.

Various grants were also given to scholars to study African art, not only within their territories, but very essentially in Africa. Economically, thousands of art museums and galleries were opened for traditional African art images, and thousands of people were employed to operate them, thereby easing the unemployment problems of these countries. The museums also served as tourist arenas for the public as well as study centres for students and scholars in many disciplines. The museums and galleries also sold various literature materials and crafts on African art. Domestically, thousands of African art images, many of which were smuggled out of Africa or illegally acquired, populated the Euro-American homes where they served as curios, decorative or aesthetic objects.

Back home in Africa or Nigeria, particularly since the Nigeria's independence, the European and American greed for African art has saturated a part of Nigeria's populace. The urge for economic gains has produced a community of smugglers who probe illicitly corners of Nigeria for treasured images to be sold to their foreign agents or customers at prices considered very high enough.

Though the Antiquity Ordinance of the late 1950s that forbade the illegal exportation or sale of Nigeria's antiquities has always been in force, the gratuitous, sinful and authoritative force of other foxy forces have not allowed the law to be in full force.

One thing was already clear to the British administration in Lagos, however, before the end of colonization. The period of abuse, the era of castigation and the days of hatred for African or Nigerian art as well as the inhuman exhibition of colonial cultural arrogance had totally gone. There was that love for the Nigerian traditional art. But this colonial, strongly perceptible penitence, like that of Christianity, had come too late to change the negative attitude of the Nigerians to art. The major artistically sacrilegious offence that the British committed in this regard was the non-introduction of Western-type of art to Nigeria throughout the colonial occupation and for the reasons already explained.

While Western music and drama, labelled entertainment, were introduced at the beginning of colonization, and when story telling, poetry, history and physical training or exercises, in forms of games and dance, were introduced to all the Nigerian primary schools, art was completely excluded. Craft was introduced mainly because of its usefulness to the official and domestic needs of the colonial administration. This introduction however, did not mean that craft was taught in schools, since craft works were supposed to be produced at home for display at the schools' premises when needed. This was because some schools considered it a waste to devote a precious time to craft which, in fact, was known and called hand work.

It has therefore become a historical landmark to know that Western art was introduced single-handedly, and without any European assistance, to Africa by an African, Aina Onabolu from Ijebu-Ode in the present Ogun State of Nigeria. Born in 1882, Onabolu started copying illustrations from foreign text books, when he was in the primary school. His teachers, friends and relations could hardly believe that he could adventure very creatively in the white man's artistic territory. Meanwhile, he was producing visual aids and charts for his school, Saint Saviour's Primary School, Ijebu Ode. When, by around 1895, he was in secondary school in Lagos, he had contact with a supplier of art materials in London, and from there, he equipped himself with materials needed to be a professional artist. By 1900, after graduation and working with the government, he had already developed to a stage where he was comparable to his European counterparts who had been formally trained in art. Many European administrators in Lagos, however, refused to believe that he was the real creators of the works seen with him; they believed that some Europeans must have been coming to his house secretly at night, to help him produce art works. This was why in 1904, he had a public demonstration of his talent at Igbosere in Lagos.

Aina Onabolu's application to government to teach in Lagos schools, without payment was turned down with flimsy reasons. He began to teach children and boys around him his "new art" as he called it. Some mission schools however allowed him to teach their pupils unofficially. This was how in 1916, he taught Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe art in Lagos when Azikiwe was 12 years old.¹⁸ When Onabolu realized that the colonial administration had

rejected his applications to teach because he had no formal education or certificate in art, he left for London in 1920 to study art in a college and from there left for France for a further study in art. When Onabolu won an art prize in his college in London, his Principal, among other things, remarked that Onabolu was the first known African to study art not only in London but also in England. This was also confirmed by Herbert Macaulay when he and other members of African Congress visited his college in 1920. Onabolu later remarked:

I believe that a woodpecker in England is the same as the wood pecker in Lagos (Nigeria). Unless it is not a woodpecker, the Lagos woodpecker can knock its peck on a tree (wood) with the same maximum efficiency and determination which is also expected of an English woodpecker. Both can create holes that God has given them as natural habitats. All woodpeckers of the same biological endowment, whether in Nigeria or England, are the same. One woodpecker is not inferior to the other.¹⁹

Onabolu returned to Nigeria in 1922 with a Diploma in art. And he was immediately given appointment to teach art at the King's College, Lagos. Within two months, he had also started teaching art part-time in all the Lagos secondary schools. For about seven years, Onabolu was the only known art teacher, artist and historian of Western art in Nigeria. He had already formally introduced Western art to the Lagos Colony, and his desire to introduce the subject to areas outside Lagos

made the colonial administration bring Kenneth C. Murray, an artist, from London to Lagos in 1927 at Onabolu's request. It was Murray who took Onabolu's new art to Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria to help realize Onabolu's dream of making Western art part of Nigeria's education. In spite of Onabolu's historical achievement for Africa, there was still that problem of professionally animated followership; definitely because of the Nigerian society's misinformation about, and misunderstanding or misjudgement of, art. This situation did not change much, even in the early independence period. Art was still held captive by the artistically uninformed Nigerian society, and parents embodied the reality of this misinformation.

The Artistically Uninformed Nigerian Society

There was no doubt that Onabolu's charismatic image in Lagos attracted many of his students who wanted to pursue art as a profession. Michael Okpara, the former Premier of Eastern Region and an art student of Aina Onabolu at the King's College, Lagos, wanted to study art in London, but his parents rejected his professional ambition. Boys and girls were castigated by parents for involving themselves in an ordinary hand exercise that was considered septic to their future. Adults who were already attracted to Art were openly and silently advised against what parents and relations saw as impending professional catastrophe, since it was believed that art would bring them extreme poverty. With this type of attitude, art, as a career, was seriously stressed within the enclave of an uninformed acrimonious society.

Art was viewed as having no insurance for the future; talk less of seeing it as alimentary to the

development of a nation. The society's highly insipid and insinuating opinion of art also, unfortunately, seemed, though temporarily, to give art no alternative than to be weakly amenable to their environmental acquired art illiteracy. One may like to reduce the weight of societal or parental culpability as to why secondary school students, especially, were intravenously injected with dislike for art if the reasons that initiated the societal non-prescience for art are logically considered. That is, one may try to understand the people's position if it is realized that their unfortunately uninformed action was also based on misinforming factors.

The major and primal one was the earlier discussed attitude of the colonial administrators and Christian missionaries to art. Particularly coming from the Europeans who were regarded as gods in those days, and more especially when some of them were also missionaries, the total rejection of African traditional art for colonial and religious reasons completely eclipsed people's attitude to accepting any form of art. People were naturally disorientated, and in spite of some ablutionary actions of the missionaries, and colonialists, even if some of those were not deliberately intended, it was already late to change people's rigidly determined position.

Again, that Western art was not introduced by the colonial government to the Nigerian schools clearly meant, to the Nigerians, that the subject was in fact very unimportant and therefore unnecessary to modern civilization which the British professed to have brought to Nigeria. This absence of art in both primary and secondary schools' curricula made the subject very foreign, distant and in fact unknown to the people. Definitely, it was clear

to the people that the subject had no place in the creation of modern Nigeria. It should be noted that art was not introduced to Lagos schools for over two decades, while in the Western, Eastern and Northern regions it made no appearance until after three decades. When this subject was eventually introduced to the schools in Nigeria, it immediately suffered a traumatic stigma which opened the subject to well contrived derision. What happened? Some schools that offered the subject gave no examination in it. To the school, art was an exercise that required no examination.

Other schools, and this was the usual practice in the early 1960s, gave examination with grades. But very unbelievably, the grades were made decorative, because they were not usually computed along with other subjects to decide students' overall positions. That is, if a student got 90% or 70%, this mark would only be recorded but not credited as part of the overall performance. But this was not the practice in all schools. However, the practice further tarnished the image of art, as parents were always quick to point this out to their children. There is an important reference to this effect.

In the late 1950s, a student showed his Report Card containing all the grades to his father. It was the tradition in those days, and I think the tradition still continues, to record in ink, or in handwriting, the grades against each subject passed or failed. The practice was also to record all pass grades in either blue or black while a fail grade would be recorded in red. The father of this boy was surprised that the 88% he got in art was recorded in red in the Report Card. The boy told his father what the practice of his school was, concerning all grades for art. The father

queried why art was made a part of the school's subjects in the first place. The student later learnt that he would have taken the third position instead of eleventh in a class of forty-five, if his art grade had been made relevant.

The entry qualification to study art in a college also made many have a low opinion of art and further polluted the minds of those who would have chosen art as their career. What happened was that from the late 1940s to the late 1950s, the colonial government realized that not many students were likely to apply for art at the Yaba Institute, now Yaba College of Technology, because of the subject's stunted image which the government itself had helped to build. Though the entry qualification for art was the same as those of the other college disciplines, Teachers Grade II Certificate with about two G.C.E. subjects was also accepted for art. To other non-art students, this was an evidence of academic inferiority which also seemed to confirm the already stereotyped belief that art was, in fact, for those who could not perform, even ordinarily, well in other subjects. The Teachers Grade II Certificate later ceased to be part of art entry qualification, but it was too late at that period. The damage was already done, and the problem of art seemed to be unending.

The society also realized that, even as late as the 1960s, art teaching in many Nigerian secondary schools was on a part-time basis. In fact, many full-time art teachers in some schools were also made to teach other subjects in addition to their art. The part-time status of art remained for a long period; making many people doubt the career or professional promise of the subject. Apart from the part-time nature of art teaching, in nearly all schools, art was also always given the last period in the time-table;

“from art to out”, as usually jocularized by some art teachers themselves. This meant that art teaching was put at the period the students were already preparing to dismiss for the day to go “out” of the school or classroom. Moreover, the last period also had the implication of accommodating students who, because they were already enfeebled by earlier teaching, lacked concentration and therefore exhibited unseriousness in the subject. To these schools, art seemed to be the last and the least. The situation did not help the image of art.

Also in the secondary schools, while subjects like physics, chemistry, biology and home economics were provided with laboratories, because of the practical nature of their instructions, art, in most schools, was taught in classrooms where other subjects like history, English and Christian religion were taught. It was T.A. Fasuyi, the former Art Adviser to the Federal Government of Nigeria, who directed, with some success, that separate Art Studios should be allocated to art. It is the nature of art, particularly those areas that required painting and carving, to necessarily or unavoidably produce droppings or material wastes. This meant that there was that tendency to have occasional drops of colour or chips of wood in these classrooms. Though students were always made to clean up their classrooms before dismissing, other teachers were always offended, for messing up their teaching environment. The above situation would have been avoided if separate Art Studios had been provided for art.

There was also this superficial or imaginary impression about artists, being rough, shabby or simplistic dressers. This rather mythical conclusion or social sophism was very rife, particularly in the colonial and early post-

colonial periods. Artists were not simplistic but some were simplified in their fashion. Artists dressed the same way other “civilized” Nigerians dressed. But naturally and generally, artists had to necessarily adopt the typical but unregimented dressing code of art professionalism. Even today, unlike the art historians, art educationists, art administrators and art critics who are not studio professionals, studio-based Art professionals are generally constrained in their choice of dressing while on their practical duties.

For this reason, one would not expect a teacher who was to give a demonstration either in sculpture, painting or ceramics to be in English suit, tie or in an elaborate traditional dress. Though an artist was expected to wear smocks while at work over any type of non-elaborate dress he might have worn to his studio or classroom, many art teachers preferred wearing simple and smart dresses which could still make their practical demonstrations possible. However, in the early 1960s, some European expatriates gave recognition to some informally trained artists through national and international exposure and heavy patronage. Many of the artists, bubbling in their great financial successes, began to exhibit raw and exotic fashion that clearly made some of them look like magicians, traditional cult devotees and urban herbalists. With this fashion attitude, the erosion of the modern artist’s image through unjustified mythical physical substantiation seemed to have no remedy.

In 1968, Mr. Jide Oshiga, a lecturer in Graphics Design at the Yaba College of Technology, had an art exhibition at the King’s College, Lagos to mark his departure overseas for a postgraduate degree in Graphics

Design and Technology. As usual, the exhibition attracted many Europeans. This aged European woman with her husband came late to the exhibition hall and walked straight to a heavily bearded man with ornamental Hausa leather bag elegantly suspended from his shoulder. The man, in short and simple shirt with its upper two buttons wide open, revealing his bushy chest hair, also wore many Hausa leather bangles in his hands. "Good day Mr. Oshiga," the woman greeted, "it's nice attending this great exhibition of yours," she said. The man, a Medical Doctor, and a Lagosian, who had just been recruited from the U.S.A. by the then Major Mobolaji Johnson, the Military Governor of Lagos state, politely responded; "Thanks Ma, I wish I am an Artist, that's Mr. Oshiga, the Artist over there with the Japanese Ambassador". Mr. Jide Oshiga, with a glass of wine was corporately dressed in black suit and with Occidental pose. One must also not forget that it was a general belief that all artists were bearded.

Perhaps one of the very major reasons for the society's rejection of art as a serious academic and intellectual institutional pre-occupation was the people's concept of popular or roadside art and artist. Popular art as the name indicates, is the most popular form or type of art in any nation. It is commonly found in many parts of any city. Unlike the art works produced by college students or formally trained professional artists, products of popular or road side artists are very cheap and easy to purchase. Works are also executed with cheap materials and raw aesthetics, because of creative laxities that are freely nourished by that incurable disregard for even the most basic rules of art. Very ideologically or socially insolvent, the subjects of the road side artists are a conglomerate of

inconsiderable and common place environmental or daily events.

The naturally resolved main objective of a popular artist is entirely economic or commercial. Art works are therefore mass produced, usually with cryptic figures and other well scandalized formal prescriptions, for which, however, these artists could be excused considering the nature of their vocation. Theirs is not to advance stylistic or creative knowledge in art but to prepare enough works for the tourists and the inexpensive society. Educationally, many are very low in formal education with two or three years of secondary school experience. Some have six years of secondary school education but without certificates. The popular artists usually learn their trade through apprenticeship.

What are interesting about the professional activities of the popular artist are the names given to their operating workshops or studios, many of which are, in fact, ambitious kiosks. In the 1960s, these were the names of some popular artists' workshops in Lagos, some of which sound like government, state or private colleges: Abacus Art Academy (in Bariga), People's Art College (in Obanikoro), Bollington (from Bola) Academy of Art (in Yaba), Odubanjo Art Institute (Party Street, Somolu), International Art Studio (Caxtin Street, Surulere), among others.

But one important aspect of the popular art experience which has not been mentioned so far is its highly commercial activities that are very productive to socio-economic growth and development. The popular artists are generally good in corporate, ceremonial, educational and other social graphic designs that the society daily indispensably patronizes. Some of these are

vehicle and other stickers, posters, tee-shirts, product labelling, street and indoor banners, rubber stamps, testimonials, invitation cards, sign boards or sign writing, picture framing as well as vehicle lettering and design. Without doubt, these artists are very proficient in the art of graphics, since this depends not really on creativity but more on the methodical or mechanical formulaic manipulation of instruments or equipment. Without doubt, many of these popular artists of the 1960s were very rich, and even today, many of them have been able to acquire wealth with their art. But this state of popular art has not been able to convince the society in their non-vivacious assessment of modern art. Rather, it has helped to further stabilize the ignorant and awry position of the people about art.

I must here refer to the question a student of pharmacy asked me in 1979, during a public lecture at the New Science Theatre, U.N.N. I have forgotten the organizer of the lecture, but it was the University of Nigeria's affair. It was an unprecedented lecture that brought over forty invited speakers, including myself, and mostly from the Faculties of the social Sciences and Arts. Speakers included Professors Nzimiro, Nnoli, Offormata, Obiechina, Anya, Boadi and, I think, Chinua Achebe. There were also, late Professor (Rev. Father) B. Okolo, and Professors Ekwelie, Okonkwo, Oluikpe, Ohaegbu, Modum, Ikejiani-Clerk, late Enekwe, and many others I am yet to recollect. It was a whole day's intellectual activity which gave each speaker only 15 minutes to address an overflowing crowd of students and staff that the area could not even accommodate. Within my own limited time I was

able to address the constraints that art had been having for decades.

Immediately I finished my presentation, the Pharmacy student asked me, very politely, what I thought about art being taught in a college or university or being made part of the university's curriculum. Before I could answer, and very fortunately for me, he continued by saying that he saw no reason why somebody should waste his time and money coming to a university to study art which, to him, could very easily be studied outside, on the road side, from the popular artists. He specifically referred to one popular artist in Onitsha who rented a shop in his father's house and converted this to an Art Studio. He went further by saying that the artist had built his own house in Orba and had a Mercedes Benz Car as well as about five apprentices. His question and comment received a very deafening applause. The very lucrative, pivotal but ignorant question, however, gave me the opportunity to civilize the artistically primitive atmosphere that appeared to pervade the Lecture Theater in order not to make the question further pervert the course of art.

I asked my questioner my own question whether or not he believed that there were also Popular Pharmacists on the streets, being a student of pharmacy. My question immediately made him become amnesiac, probably because of the psychological fear of self-contradicting implication. I could no more wait for an answer while I emphatically told him that there was also Popular or Roadside pharmacist. I went further to explain that the Nigerian communities were very wealthy with thousands of informal pharmacists who were not trained in any college or university; those who did not even have any secondary

education but, through apprenticeship, became some of the richest people in their communities; even richer than many who had higher degrees in Pharmacy. Following his curvy line of thought, I advanced another question to him as to why he did not go to Onitsha Market to be apprenticed to one of the big pharmacy stores or any of the Onitsha small or big Popular or Roadside pharmacy shops or stores, instead of coming to University of Nigeria to dissipate his energy and waste his time and money. The applause I received totally neutralized his earlier one.

But I still went further by saying that since pharmacy is also “the study or practice of preparing drugs and medicines,”²⁰ and since medicine is the treatment of sicknesses and injuries, he would have even had his apprenticeship under a herbalist, may be, in Ijebu-Ode, because by profession , a herbalist is also “someone who grows, sells or uses herbs, especially to treat illness”.²¹ This is saying that a herbalist is also a traditional or popular extension or representative of a pharmacist, trained in a college or university. I had the opportunity to make the audience realize that nearly all the disciplines or courses taught in a college or university were, and are still, popularly or informally represented or practised as follows:²²

College/University Disciplines	Popular, Roadside Representations
Medicine	Traditional Medicine (Trado-Medico) practitioners; Herbalist.
Pharmacy	Herbalists, Medicine sellers

Civil Engineering	Bricklayer, Masons, Carpenters, etc.
Electronic Engineering	Popular, Roadside Radio Mechanics
Electrical Engineering	Popular, Roadside Electricians or Rewires, etc.
Mechanical Engineering	Popular, Roadside Welders, Panel Beaters, etc.
Automobile Engineering	Popular, Roadside Motor Mechanics, Fitters, etc.
Agriculture	Farmers, etc.
Business Administration (Accountancy, Banking, Management etc)	Popular Traders, Business Men and Women, Money Lenders, etc.
Education	Traditional and Modern Apprenticeship Systems, etc
Dentistry	Traditional Healers, Herbalists, etc.
Music	Popular Musicians, Singers, etc.
Drama/Theatre Art	Popular Self-made Actors, Travelling Theatre Practitioners, etc.
Architecture	Popular, Roadside Draftsmen, etc.
Geoinformatics and Surveying	Popular Surveyors, etc.
Urban and Regional Planning	Popular Local Planners.
Veterinary Medicine	Popular, Local Animal Keepers, Healers, etc.
Home Science	Popular Sewing Institutes,

(Economics)	Home Crafts, Home Keeping, etc.
Food Science and Technology	Popular Catering or Cooking Schools, Hoteliers, etc.

In fact, as stated above, apart from those “modern” pure sciences that are very foreign to African or Nigerian indigenous traditions, all modern college or university disciplines, particularly the practically oriented ones, are directly or indirectly made operational in people’s local traditions. Of course, there were even unmethodized scientific trappings in many African indigenous therapeutic, herbal or medicinal practices: However, if one takes a total view of the above discussion, one will see that all instruments or infrastructures for existence and development were already in place before colonization. That is, during colonization, Europeans did not bring new ideas but new methods or approaches that improved the already existing ones.

Art Stigmatization in Higher Educational Institutions

Many art students, art teachers, artists and art historians in this auditorium are now enjoying the celestial freedom which the art profession has brought them as art practioners, without knowing how elusive this freedom was to their earlier generations. The history of this freedom can now be very emotionally alluring, but the attendant misery is difficult to erase from history.

The Yaba Technical Institute, later known as Yaba College of Technology as earlier noted, was the first

college, or institution of higher learning, in Nigeria. As should be expected, art was not made part of the college curricula. Also when in the late 1940s the University College, now University of Ibadan, was opened to be an extension of the University of London, colonial apathy or even antipathy for visual arts totally eclipsed the discipline. In 1950, Kenneth C. Murray sent a proposal to the University of London, the Ministry of Education, Lagos, and the Principal of the University College, Ibadan, about the necessity to make art part of the curricula of the newly established University.²³ Benjamin Enwonwu, who was at that time the Art Adviser to the colonial government, the highest administrative post in the arts at that time, gave a supporting letter to Murray's proposal.²⁴

There was pressure from many quarters to make Murray's effort yield fruit. But the University authority in its reply apologized to Murray that the "college does not have the intention of accommodating art now or in the near future".²⁵ With this response, the hope of introducing art was given a clinical abortion which totally paralyzed all the working systems for possible pregnancy, without any hope of delivery. Till today, University of Ibadan, though with a postgraduate programme in visual arts history or African studies, still wears that garment of colonial arrogance, without any academic tradition of Fine Arts.

Thanks to the powerful private firms, like the United African Company (U.A.C) in Nigeria. The firms were aware that Nigeria already had many art scholars and teachers but still deficient in those areas of art that were very useful to modern industry. This was how art was introduced in 1952 to the Yaba Technical Institute to

provide “in-service training for graphic artists in different departments (firms).”²⁶

The introduction of art at the Institute, the first in the history of Modern Nigerian art, was very encouraging, but the scope was still insufficient to provide the needed manpower for Nigeria. Meanwhile, it got to the position where it seemed that the expatriates in Nigeria were even more concerned about the incapacity of art to enter Nigeria’s novel university. Many Nigerian academic elite were very parochially unconcerned while some were yet to be convinced about its relevance to a modern state. The relentless efforts of the expatriates, as well as those of many Nigerians whose hands had not been fettered by colonial cynicism, produced the awaited result when in 1953 “the introduction of Onabolu’s Western form of art became a rewarding reality with the establishment of the Department of Fine Arts at the Ibadan campus of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (NCAST).”²⁷ The college was later transferred to Zaria in 1955 before transforming to Ahmadu Bello University.²⁸

Art would not have been part of the University of Nigeria’s programmes if not for the foresight, natural and historic interest of Nnamdi Azikiwe. It was Nnamdi Azikiwe who directed that Fine Arts should be made a part of the University’s curricula when the initial draft of the institution’s programmes was presented to him in 1958. We must also remember that it was Nnamdi Azikiwe who conceived the idea of the institution of the University of Nigeria which, in fact, he initially called. “African University of Nigeria” before his colleagues in the Eastern House of Assembly, after a long debate, convinced him to the contrary.²⁹ When a group of Igbo students at the

Nigerian College of Arts, science and Technology, Zaria learnt in 1961 about the proposal “to establish a College of Fine Art at Nsukka (U.N.N.)”, a letter was written by Uche Okeke on their behalf to “His Excellency, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe” who was at that time the Governor-General of Nigeria.³⁰

Uche Okeke who later become a Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Nigeria, Head of Department for many years, Dean of Arts and Director, Institute of African Studies, thanked Nnamdi Azikiwe for trying “to build a distinctive modern African Art culture”³¹ and for making University of Nigeria “the second University (after A.B.U.) art school and indeed the first in any autonomous higher institution” in Nigeria.³² In his reply, dated April 20, 1961 from the State House, Lagos, Azikiwe stated:

Thank you for your letter, contents of which have been noted. In deciding to establish university of Nigeria, the Provisional Council had in mind the points raised in your letter. In addition to staff, we are recruiting from abroad to teach our sons and daughters the techniques of painting, designing and sculpturing We are determined that our artists should be firmly rooted in Nigerian society³³

The establishment of an art department at the University of Nigeria became real when Enwonwu College of Fine Arts, now Department of Fine and Applied Arts, admitted students for 1961/1962 academic year. Miss Margaret Dunlap, an American, was brought by Nnamdi Azikiwe to be an Acting Head of Department as a Senior

Lecturer. He also employed Akinola Lasekan, the first West African cartoonist as a lecturer. The initial programme of the department “was fashioned very much on the pattern of American art colleges.”³⁴ This was not surprising since Nnamdi Azikiwe himself had his education in the United States of America.

It was clear that Zik, as he was popularly known, showed special interest in art. And as the Chairman of the University of Nigeria Provision Council, he implored the art students and staff to “make this torch of creativity (art) which Aina Onabolu gave us at the dawn of this century brighter and more enlightening to Africa”.³⁵ In his special visit to the department with some members of the Provisional Council, Nnamdi Azikiwe acknowledged the fact that “fine arts characteristically requires a lot of space which is why Ansah Goldie building was originally designed for art”.³⁶ Zik was referring to the present building housing the Department of Economics. In fact, part of the ground floor of the building accommodated the Textiles Section of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts before the Nigerian Civil War.

Nnamdi Azikiwe, because of his exposure and the developmental value of art, gave special attention to art because, in his goodwill message to Akinola Lasekam, in 1961 “No modern society can develop industrially or meaningfully without ART.”³⁷ Zik however, concluded his speech during his visit to the College of Fine Arts with the following message:

I will stop here so as to allow you to return to your studios to continue creating those images that will help “Restore the Dignity Man” in our LAND. --- But note that art is

the blood relation of development, and those who abnegate its alimentary existence are definitely not part of our civilized society.³⁸

In the discussion so far, effort has been made to examine the emergence of formal art in the Nigerian institutions of higher learning; that is, Yaba Technical Institute or Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, now Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These were the only art institutions offering art in the early 1960s. It is important to now consider what the art students in each of these institutions suffered as a result of the ignorant attitude of the non-art students, staff, the administration and government. I will start with the Nigeria College of Arts, Science and Technology (NCAST), Zaria.

At the NCAST, Zaria, and right from 1955 when the young art students all in their twenties, enrolled in the college, there was that clear lack of echoed and unechoed respect for art by non art students, particularly. Many of the art students, especially between 1955 and 1958, were so conscious of this debasement of art profession that they suddenly began to live very dejectedly in their own burdened and isolated professional microcosm. What compounded the students' problems was the baptism, by rejection or slight, which these students received from their uninformed society before entering college. In some students' socio-political events, some of the art students were summarily rated incompetent; without even "knowing that some of the art students had grade one in their Cambridge School Certificate Examination," and forgetting

that art students entered the college with the same basic entry requirements which other students had.³⁹ The college administration also did not help the situation, because matters, particularly about welfare, were either churlishly or ingenuously handled when these concerned art students.

Very unfortunately, many of these young art students became captive to other students' feelings and the administration's chimerical concepts of art. Very miserably, some of the students' self-confidence in their art lapsed and became corrupted, and this situation also naturally began to contravene their earlier professional optimism. Instead of wearing dresses that were suitable for their professional practice or studio environment, some of the students, in an attempt to please their artistically uniformed surrounding, began to wear suits or jackets with ties to match.

A particular art student was so ashamed of his course that he had to deceive his girlfriend from another department that he was an Engineering student. In addition, some art students, according to Uche Okeke, always felt very shy of carrying the materials, instruments or painting canvases, among others, that clearly identified them as art students. One of the art students seen with an application form to study another subject in Russia denied his intention to leave Zaria. He eventually left on scholarship for Russia at the end of the session. Meanwhile, it was clear that the doomsday for some students' art aspirations was fixed. This was because these few students eventually decamped from art to, particularly Architecture, Engineering and Education which, according to Yusuf Grillo, they considered more socially acceptable, gainful and respectable. While this was going on, many art students

refused to contravene and vilify their regally conviction in art as their future career. Instead of dumping art or being weakened by very defective societal hypothesis, they were determined to fight, very frontally, with intelligence, wisdom, creativity, language power, self confidence or strong will. What followed was a convocation of ideas mostly by few Igbo art students who were not ready to surrender their artistic pride to caustic and vile feelings of their artistically uniformed and misinformed environment.⁴⁰

These students were Uche Okeke, the embodiment of the impending revolution, Simon Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Emmanuel Odita, O. Nwagbara, Oseloka Osadebe, Felix Ekeada, Yusuf Grillo and Bruce Onobrakpeya. Apart from revolting ideologically, against the parasitic and non-African nature of their art curriculum, they set in motion the agenda for total art rehabilitation in their college. Many of these students had already acquired such academic pride, through their excellent Cambridge School Certificate Examination results, that emboldened them to raise their heads high on the campus; particularly also knowing that many of their secondary school classmates whose results were not as good as theirs were in the departments of Architecture, Engineering and English, for example.⁵¹ The non-departmental Zaria Art Society which the students formed in 1958 became a revolutionary commune that gave the students the opportunity to showcase their creative, academic, intellectual and ideological exuberance.

Combining various creative events with many literary activities on the campus, these art students, especially Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Brnce Onobrakpeya and Yusuf Grillo, quickly made themselves

popular and acceptable, not necessarily for their art but essentially for their extra-art achievements. For example, Demas Nwoko, as a student, featured highly in critical, instrumental essays in some daily newspapers. The essays, which were well creamed with sound English and penetrating messages, generally focused on some inadequacies of his college, colonial injustices and academic laziness among many college teachers who depended solely on foreign text books without writing their own.

Nwoko descended heavily and critically on the teaching or state of Drama, particularly at the University of Ibadan. He sang in praise of local professional theatres which, to him, should be an influence on college drama. Nwoko saw public buildings in Nigeria as lacking aesthetics and, in addition, wanted art to be an integral part of public or government buildings. It was not surprising that when Demas Nwoko graduated, majoring in sculpture, after four years in Zaria, he became “one of the most creatively versatile professionals or artists in Africa.”⁴² Very unbelievably, the University of Ibadan later employed him after graduation as a lecturer in the Drama department of the institution. Nwoko voluntarily retired as a Senior Lecturer in Drama, advocating that Professorship had nothing to do with the professionalism of Drama. Nwoko later raised his own world class theatre or drama group which was selected to perform for Nigeria during FESTAC '77.

Demas Nwoko is also internationally known as an Architect, having designed and built several public and private buildings in Nigeria. His architectural structures are very organic with a mixture of European and African

architectural order. Apart from being a sculptor, he is also a publisher. His New Culture Studio building in Ibadan, built in the early 1970s, still remains a piece of architectural innovation and a tourist delight. There, he was able to publish several volumes of his New Culture Journals. Nwoko was also a politician, having once competed for the presidency of Nigeria.

I have focused on Demas Nwoko here not because others like Uche Okeke, in fact, the Chief Revolutionary Leader of Zaria, and Onobrakpeya as well as Grillo performed less in their unique contributions to the reformation of art and artists in the Nigerian society. Among other historic and glutinous contributions of Uche Okeke as an artist, art historian, art reformist, dramatist, writer, poet and scholar, I will only discuss the poetry competition organized by the Nigerian Arts Council, Lagos. Uche Okeke, as a third year student, entered this competition with his poem: "Young Munchi Rowers."⁴³ Out of over 500 people, including college students, graduates, lecturers, administrators, among others, who competed in Nigeria and Cameroon, only 50 poems were shortlisted. Eventually, Uche Okeke won the first poetry prize.

The news of an art student winning a prize for what was not in his professional territory was shocking to many non-art students and even staff. Some could still not believe that an art student, considered competent only in practical activities, like art, could be capable in any academic work. The Nigerian Broadcasting Service, (NBS), now known as the Nigerian Radio Corporation, made the situation worse not only for Uche Okeke, but also for the entire art

populace. In its evening news, this was what the Nigerian Broadcasting Service relayed to the world:

Nigeria, no doubt, has produced many creative minds that are the pride of the present and future Nigeria The Arts Council has just released the result of its poetry competition The first prize has GONE TO A STUDENT OF ENGLISH, UCHE C. OKEKE OF THE NIGERIAN COLLEGE, ZARIA (emphasis mine). It was gathered that over 500 Nigerians and expatriates entered for this competition.

⁴⁴
....

The above episode which the NBS later retracted and apologized for, has said it all. It is, very evidently, a synthetic or artificial compendium of people's concept of art. However, by the time these revolutionaries and other students had graduated in 1961, many artistically uncivilized minds had been civilized. There was a greater measure of respect for art, from staff, students and administration. This, as should be understood already, was due to some reasons: the students ability not to please their uniformed community but to assert, very positively, their innate academic, intellectual and creative worth; the well publicized poetry prize of Uche Okeke which also invited a written commendation from the college administration; the regular publicity usually given to the art events in the print and electronic media the opportunity which students in other departments rarely had; the popularity which the media exposure gave some art students in Nigeria, the U.S.A. and Germany for their art activities; the economic

security which many of the art students enjoyed as a result of either art commissions or works of art sold to patrons and, very importantly, the unprecedented role that art played, particularly in Lagos, during the Nigerian independence in 1960.

Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko were some of the students in Zaria commissioned to decorate the Exhibition Pavilion in Lagos. Both the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and the Western Nigerian Television, Ibadan, covered these art students at work. The Zaria experience was a success story regarding the respectable image that art acquired in the college. But the situation was very different at the Yaba College of Technology, even as late as 1967.

Despite the fact that Yaba College of Technology was the first institution in Nigeria to start art teaching, its attitude to art, even by 1967, remained the most primitive, punitive and totally retrogressive. There was no reason for this situation other than the usual societal ignorance of art, particularly when students in all the college disciplines were admitted with the same basic academic requirements, the Grade II attachment to art notwithstanding. Students who had performed very creditably, even with distinctions, in their West African School Certificate Examination, finished registration only to be dressed in garments of inferiority that they were conditioned to wear as second-rated students of the college. Their only “crime” was being art students. In the college’s School of Art were four units: General Art (Fine Arts), Commercial Art (Applied Arts), Fashion Design and Printing. In those days, West African School Certificate results were graded one, two or three. Only grades one and two were accepted for admission. It was not easy to make grade one. All over Nigeria, in a class

of, for example, forty, if five students were in grade one, that school would be automatically rated academically sound.

Many schools did not produce grade one students at all in their final examinations. In the Fashion Design Section, headed by an Italian, Mrs. Eve de Negri, there was one grade one student. In the Commercial Section there was one, while there was one, late Adediran, in the General Art Section. However, the session 1967/1968 opened with the hope of enjoying total academic, social and humane freedom from the college I so much valued. It did not take me time to know that the college already had an informally or silently preconceived notion of art. This was shocking because if one had known, one would have fortified oneself psychologically, at least, to meet the awaiting demeaning challenges without any embarrassing surprise. I will here graphically present the major problems of the art students which were mainly administrative, governmental and societal.

For example, the art students were humiliated with very poor or disgraceful hostel accommodation. It was clear that the college administration had already had a very fanatical interest in applied and social sciences as well as secretarial studies. Engineering studies were the most popular areas that enjoyed the greatest infrastructural and financial support from the government. The areas also enjoyed the best welfare policy from the college administration. While students of Engineering and other disciplines were each accommodated in one well furnished modern room, art students, except one or two, were put in a dormitory that accommodated eight students; a secondary school experience indeed. Apart from being eight, the

dormitory was located inside an antiquated colonial building, popularly described by students as “Sahara Desert,” “Den of Mosquitoes” and “Castration Unit.”

Visitors or friends in the college had to be received, without any privacy, in the presence of other dormitory mates which we jokingly called in-mates. The condition became more unbearable to those visited by their girl friends. Naturally, some students began to make friends with other students with a one-room accommodation. Some of these well accommodated students were also always willing to give out their rooms for about one hour or more when needed for what had already been popularly known as “Private Practice.” We were also unlucky to have a Welfare Officer, now Dean of students, Mr. Afuwape, whose cynical and acrimonious attitude to art and art students definitely qualified him for a pathological attention. The Welfare Officer deliberately and joyfully manifested his abhorrence for art with offensive exuberance. Despite our uncivilized accommodation, we were usually starved of needed toiletries, among other hostel services. I must be frank to say here that Mr. Afuwape, as a man and as an administrator could be good, but as long as art or an art students did not cross his way.

Also very unbelievably, there was the problem of certificate quantification by the college. It was unfortunate that the certificate issued by a government-owned institution was not recognized by the same government. While students of some departments were awarded diplomas, art students and the students of one other department were awarded certificates. The situation was however reversed before we graduated. The position became more complex and brutalizing to art students when

it was also known that the government had no officially approved or recognized salary scale for art graduates, with the same two-year “Ordinary National Diploma” (O.N.D) like the students of other departments, at the mercy of government and, particularly, private employers.

That is, some O.N.D. holders in art ended up receiving a West African School Certificate salary, “pending the time government would have a clearer policy on this matter.”⁴⁵ As late as 1968 when the government eventually addressed very positively this problem, Mr. John Oduah of blessed memory, my Yaba classmate from Asaba, was still being paid a School Certificate salary by the New Era Girls’ Secondary School, Lagos; more so, when the school even expected him to be grateful for allowing him to teach art. He eventually secured a well salaried job with a private foreign company in Lagos.

However, those who graduated before us were able to adjust to the way the college environment had disrespected their future profession. According to Bili Koleosho, “though those who were art students before us were humiliated and disgusted with the way other students and college administration treated them, they just ignored this, seeing it as an unnecessary distraction and moreover, they were not as young as ourselves.”⁴⁶ This was what the students of the session 1967/1988 would not accept. The above treatment of art was enough to make the newly enrolled and some old art students decide to take an uncompromising, corrective action. We gave no latitude for submission. We were not even aware that such treatment was also given to the Zaria art students a decade before our own experience. It was time for action; to fight or contaminate the nutrients for the administration’s selective

treatment. We became uncomfortable with the situation where students of some cherished departments almost suffered from professional obesity while our own career was suffering from perennial malnutrition.

This type of administration's rather genuflective acceptance of the courses considered prestigious, to the disadvantage of art, that was considered infamous or professionally decorative to nation building, made us agree to take the following actions: write to the Minister of Education, Mr. Cookey; take part in socio-political events; form an underground writers club; write in the "Public Opinion" of some daily newspapers, particularly the *Daily Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Express* and *Tribune*; start a college magazine that would cover not only art but other departmental activities; display any form of academic or creative potential very vigorously to the delight of the college students, but without being professionally apologetic; approach some of our lecturers, particularly the Head of Art School, Yusuf Grillo, for pertinent advice or the way forward, among other actions. In fact, since we were sure that our college problems were not untraversable, our ideas suddenly became encyclopaedic for total enfranchisement.

The nature of this lecture can definitely not permit the discussion of all the aforementioned. However, luckily for us, by the time we were considering the publication of a magazine, one Samo, a student of Horology Department from Sierra Leone, came to Bili Koleosho, a year ahead of me, with even a more ambitious publishing intention. With Koleosho's effort we eventually teamed up to launch the *Techo Star Magazine* in 1968. Samo was the Editor, while Bili Koleosho, an art student, but now a professional

Architect and Adjunct Professor of Architecture at the University of Lagos, became the Deputy Editor. I was made the Features Editor. There were other editors from other departments. The magazine became the conscience of the college and the defender of the oppressed or the poor. It was really a very critical publication.

We believed in facts, and we did not spare any student, including our H.N.D students and the President of the Student Union, Hazan Sumonu who later became the President of the Nigerian Labour Congress. One event that incited my strong criticism was the 1967/1968 Rag-Day outing. The students' executive so belittled our art department that it did not commission any art student to design the Crown of the Rag Queen; whereas, both University of Lagos and the Federal School of Science, Lagos commissioned us to design their Rag Queen crowns. The following is an excerpt of my lengthy criticism to this effect:

...can you imagine that the executive is so unfamiliar with the principles of design that a Rag-Queen crown was made without consideration for the biological endowment or attributes of the Rag Queen? The degree of its ludicrousness becomes more elastic if it is also known that the crown was designed by a Civil Engineering student who believes that a plan of a house could be drawn without knowing the dimension of the land. What a civil joke?⁴⁷

However, before the end of our first session, we had succeeded in our major plans, considering all the above

itemized blueprint for victory. For example, our literary efforts had earned us much adulation among students; particularly when it was also known that we were behind all the earlier propagandist essays that were pseudonymously written in the students Secretariat. We had already made it clear that art was the backbone of modern development; that only a lazy artist could be financially handicapped; that the richest lecturers on campus, Yusuf Grillo and Isiaka Osunde, were art lecturers; that the most expensive cars on the campus belonged to art lecturers; that the most widely traveled lecturer, to the U.S.A and Europe, was Yusuf Grillo, that the only students, without scholarships and salaries like the Engineering students, who could support or sponsor themselves, even without parental help, were art students; that the only department that could help solve Nigeria's unemployment problems was the art department, because with little or no capital, art students could easily start their own business infrastructures.

Not only that, the only department that had attracted the greatest number of foreign visitors to the college was the art department. Of course, we were also able to echo, with pride, that one of the first indigenous staff to head the Yaba College of Technology, though on an acting capacity, was an art teacher, in the person of Yusuf Grillo. It was during Grillo's period that the council approved a new art complex which eventually became the biggest and most aesthetic building in the college. Among other things that positively rewarded our struggle was our removal from the castration unit to a better accommodation at the beginning of the second session. And before the end of the session 1968/1969, our certificates had been changed and

quantified as diplomas with the same salary structure that other O.N.D. holders had.

The school of Art also naturally became the chief designer of the Rag-Queen crown. In terms of creative versatility, the students of the School of Art had started featuring prominently. For example, Bili Koleosho, a Mathematician who taught Mathematics at the Baptist Academy, Lagos like Tayo Ojomo before him, was already known for his architectural drawings. He was also a guitarist for the Techo Riders, the college musical group. Agbo Johnson, a painter who later became Mrs. Kolade Oshinowo, was a fashion designer and good public speaker. Peju Oyekan, the daughter of the Oba of Lagos, was known for her body modelling and fashion design. Okesola was a specialist in art photography and portraiture. In addition to my fine arts studies, I was also known as a singer, dancer, boxer, fashion designer and writer. Shade Awoliyi who later became Mrs. Aregbe, was a poet and composer. However, by the time I graduated, changes were not just apparent but were very real. But as regards salary level which the government had already approved for us, some employers still tried to be difficult, giving, for example, the reason that this had not been seen in the government gazette.

On my part, I was lucky to have a teaching job that even gave me a salary that almost equalled that of a university graduate. My academic effort, however, was instrumental to this luck. At the end of my first year in the college, my result showed that like Koleosho before me, I was the overall best student in the four divisions of the School of Art. This performance automatically qualified me for the “Lintas Scholarship Award for the Outstanding

Art Student of the Year.” Lintas Publicity was a Graphics Division of the United African Company (U.A.C.) in Nigeria. The result also automatically qualified me for an immediate, but not mandatory, appointment with the company after graduation. At the end of my two-year O.N.D programme, I also had the overall best result which made the U.A.C. more eager to have me with a fat salary. But various internal correspondences in me became disharmonious, making it difficult to take a decision as to whether or not to take up the Lintas job. This was because I already had the intention of teaching art in a secondary school in Lagos, to follow the teaching profession of my father. My earlier civil service work experience, full of highly restrictive and strict administrative regimentation, was also enough to discourage any young man with strong ambition.

I eventually began teaching at the Bariga Girls’ Secondary School Lagos to be the first full-time art teacher in the school. The Principal who was well informed about art, met all my demands for art teaching: separate Art Studio, a variety of art materials, approval to regularly tour areas of artistic and cultural interest in and around Lagos and the provision of an extra large board to advertise the importance of art to the community. On the board, which was eight times the size of the school’s sign Board, was boldly written in black colour: ART IS THE BASIS OF EDUCATION. It was mounted very high at the gate of the school. The whole school began to talk art. Before leaving the school after almost two years, I had produced many future artists. Years later, I was able to see two of them in the U.S.A. studying art.

So far I have discussed how art suffered from understanding and ignorance at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology and at the Yaba College of Technology. The situation was slightly different at the third pioneer art institution in Nigeria, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. As already discussed, that Nnamdi Azikiwe was involved in the introduction of art to Nsukka meant, to some people, that there must be good reasons for Azikiwe to take this action. For this reason, especially, both students and staff of the university were not really concerned about what art was and was not. But generally, people still had the impression that art, being practically oriented, was not an academic discipline, without knowing the theoretical basis that informed the production of art.

No doubt, this influence of Nnamdi Azikiwe made the University of Nigeria administration rate art high, like other courses, in the University before 1970. In fact, special attention was given to art as regards space, infrastructure, staffing and promotion. The presence of Akinola Lasekan in the department made a difference. He was a designer, illustrator and painter who was well known for his Lash Studio Correspondence School that dated back to the early 1950s. He was the cartoonist to Nnamdi Azikiwe's *West African Pilot* from the late 1930s to the early 1960s. In fact, if art had problems or if there were problems for art, these were not made open.

The pioneer art students also had no reason to develop complex for their chosen career, or to feel inferior to other students, particularly when, like other students, they were admitted on the strength of their distinctive school certificate results. For example, Babatunde Lawal had grade one. He eventually became the first Nigerian to

have a Ph.D. degree in Art History and the first formally assessed and “officially” promoted Professor of Art History in Nigeria. No doubt, the University of Nigeria embraced art genuinely from 1961 to the beginning of the Nigerian Civil War. However, after the war, or from 1970, certain things began to happen. Some Senior, academics in the University began to occasionally make smearing or primitive statements about Fine Arts in the University. One of these, from an academic, was that art was better studied in a technical college. This unfortunate effusion of an ignoramus who was probably inebriated did not know that for centuries art had been part of university studies in Europe and America, for example. The cumulative effects of this and similar innuendos had already affected the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria Nsukka, but at the staff level. The situation had changed from the radiant pre-civil war period to the cloudy post-war era. By 1976, it was already very clear that some lecturers in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts were not being promoted mainly because they had more of art features or art exhibition and less of paper publications.

These were lecturers who had specialized in the studio areas of fine and applied arts. That is, practical or studio art works were no more accepted for promotion. Going by this new, though unformalised assessment policy, definitely about two-thirds of the academic staff were adversely affected, because the ratio of their studio publications to paper publications could easily be faulted. Those who were not studio based like me had no problem since our professional focus was art history. Some staff in the studio areas, who were not art historians and art educationists, but had also had numerous paper

publications to their credit, also had no problem. One of these was Professor Uche Okeke, a Reader that time, who had already published books on art and poetry and several essays on art and humanities in journals within and outside Nigeria. Obiora Udechukwu and Chike Aniakor, like Uche Okeke, also had no problem.

It was this onerous period, during the 1977/1978 session, that the Head of Department, Uche Okeke, invited me to his office and expressed his dissatisfaction with how the rejection of studio or practical works for promotion had completely sapped the teaching morale of his staff and stalled their promotion possibilities. He asked me for what could be done. Before this time, and for about seven months, I had been the departmental representative in the Faculty Committee on the Criteria for Appointments and Promotions. Professor Emmanuel Obiechina of the Department of English and the former Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, who unfortunately died before completing writing this lecture, was the Chairman of this committee. I was at that time lecturer II and Head of Art History Sub-Section. Uche Okeke's question galvanized my enthusiasm to think very deeply of a creative way of finding a solution that would upset the University of Nigeria's uninformed treatment of studio lecturers. I told Uche Okeke to give me about two weeks to see what could be done.

After one and a half weeks, having studied the existing Yellow Book or criteria for promoting other lecturers in the University, I came up with my own version of the "Criteria for Appointments and Promotions of the Fine Arts Studio Lecturers." All over the world, I was very aware, universities and colleges had always taken into

consideration the creative professionalism, or studio efforts, of a teacher during promotion exercises. These studio efforts are art exhibitions which are in categories: One-man or Solo Exhibition, Two-man or Joint Exhibition and More than Two-Man or Group Exhibition. Each category can feature under either major or minor.

However, in my four-page final submission to Professor Uche Okeke who had already become the Dean of Arts, I scored a Major Solo Exhibition like a major published book with one author, as shown in the Yellow Book; Major Joint or Two-Man Exhibition was scored like a major co-authored published book and Major Group Exhibition scored like major published work with more than two authors. I recommended that each art exhibition category MUST have along with it “an ambitiously published brochure or catalogue which must be introduced by a well-known competent art historian, art critic or artist and which must contain the artist’s or artists’ biographical, philosophical or ideological statements in addition to samples of exhibited works”, among other requirement.⁴⁸ I also recommended that studio lecturers must have paper publications, or books, monographs and articles which should be assessed along with their art exhibitions on a ratio to be determined by the Faculty Criteria for Appointments and Promotions Committee.

When Professor Obiechina saw what our department had submitted to him, as prepared by me, he enthusiastically called on the representatives of the Departments of Music and Sub-Department of Drama, now Department of Theatre and Film Studies, to use the new Fine and Applied Arts submission to influence their own appropriately. Immediately, Music and Drama began to

change Major Solo Exhibition to Major Performance, and so on. Eventually, all the submissions of the Faculty of Arts Committee were approved by the University. It was a jubilant period for the Fine and Applied Arts lecturers who had already lost hope of being promoted with their creative works. In fact, a ceramics lecturer had already resigned and employed by a college of Education when he heard of the good news. He had to write another letter for the withdrawal of his resignation letter which was strongly supported by Professor Uche Okeke before he was finally reabsorbed.

However, the above achievement was not acceptable to, but ridiculed by, a cabal whose ignorance of art was effectively loudened by their deceptive, prejudicial magisterial opinion. One of these, who was bold enough to externalize his feelings was a Professor of Physics in U.N.N.; not Professor A.O.E. Animalu and not Professor F.N. Ndili, but a Nigerian. This was the time the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, still enjoying the euphoria of its achievement, was cleaning up the stench already left by the denigration of its art and studio art teachers. This Professor of Physics wrote a three-page protest letter to the Vice-Chancellor and copied the Chairman of Council, Deans of Faculty, Director (now Dean), Postgraduate School (now School of Postgraduate Studies) and all the Professors in the University.

Among other uninformed miscomputations of art, the Professor regretted that a university, like University of Nigeria, could allow itself to be deceived that art could be rated like paper publication for the assessment of a lecturer. He saw the study of Fine and Applied Arts in a university

as very peripheral and not really academically as well as intellectually replenishing.

The Professor referred his readers to the College of Medicine, saying that if an art exhibition was accepted for assessment, then every successful surgery performed by a Medical Doctor should also be accepted as his own exhibition and should be promoted accordingly. That is, if a Doctor performed ten successful major surgeries, each of these should score 15 points like each solo art exhibition. The Professor unfortunately did not even know what an exhibition was; that each major art exhibition which could take about one to three years to organize could also feature between 50 to 100 works. But the nudity as well as the duplicity of the Professor's argument became very apparent when he asserted equivocally that after all fine art is nothing but a public relations affair.

Professor Uche Okeke as Dean of Arts, on receiving this letter constituted a committee of three, to study and respond to the letter. The committee, made up of Dr. C.C. Aniakor, late Dr. J.N. Amankulor of the Su-Department of Drama, and myself, with Dr. Amankulor as Chairman, met two times. The notice for the third meeting was already given when I went to Professor Uche Okeke, telling him that it was unnecessary for us to even reply unless the Vice-Chancellor asked for his comment. That was the end of this matter; because the administration also ignored the counter-productive letter. This was how the Department of Fine and Applied Arts was able to sedate for total victory the seductive action of a few crafty academic elite in the University. However, in spite of the present popularity of art in nearly all the colleges and universities in Nigeria, and though the pursuit of art is no more shackled, like before,

by societal uninformed attitude, there is no doubt that some Nigerians still have some misguided misgivings for art; mainly because these people are yet to realize the superior role of art in nation building. It is now, therefore, necessary to adventure into the nature of art.

What is Art?

In our modern age, trying to define art is not only proving difficult but also almost impossible, mainly because of various historical and art historical stages that the word has crossed, particularly from the prehistoric to the present. The definition becomes more difficult if one considers the ever-growing complexities of its functions. Does one define it ordinarily, technically or professionally? Can we look at the word academically or is it its philosophical ideological, religious, social or cultural dimensions one should consider? What about the therapeutic aesthetic, domestic and general industrial attributes of art? Is it not also possible to define art as innocently but misinformingly understood by the audience in this hall? However, taking into consideration the nature of this lecture, I will ordinarily define art as synthetically considered generally by dictionaries. That is, art is the deliberate or conscious employment of skill and “creativity” to produce visually aesthetic and other functional art images. The word “creativity” is very sensitive here because it is what has made art an uncommon professional phenomenon; that is, the ability to bring into physical reality what has not been. It is what has made it divine. This takes us to the first Artist, the Creator, the God Almighty.

In the Book of Saint John, chapter 1, verse 1, there is “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”.⁴⁹ But, before the above “in the beginning was the Word”, in the same Holy Bible, Genesis chapter 1, verses 1-3, there is also “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” which was initially void and full of darkness. And God said “let there be light and there was light”.⁵⁰ The above vividly shows that before the “Word”, there was creation, therefore there was ART, because God, before He spoke, already created, bringing into existence what had not been. This had also made God, the Creator, the First and Greatest Artist. This was probably what was in the mind of Sir Thomas Browne, the 17th Century Physician, when he said that “Nature is the Art of God”.⁵¹

In addition, in Genesis chapter I, verses 27 to 28, “God created man in his own image --- male and female -- - And said unto them be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it”, and have dominion over other living things on the face of the earth. A dispassionate interpretation of the above shows that our first parents did not really look like God as regards physiognomy and physique; afterall, except through few artists’ creative imagination, nobody knows what God looks like. But having God’s image simply means that God has endowed us “with the attributes which He himself possesses”.⁵² Two of these are the ability to create and appreciate beauty.

This is where art and therefore artists, have made man different from animals or any other living things that can equally be fruitful and multiply. This is also where artists, and those with artistic instincts, are direct images of God; the conclusion that is also found among the traditional

Yoruba of Nigeria, the Bakuba of Zaire and the Bambara of Mali who believe that a wood carver, therefore a creator, is second to God. An animal or a bird cannot create, because, unlike man or an artist, it has no creative or design sense. That is why the nests of a sparrow and an eagle or the habitats of a bush rat and a gorilla have not changed, but have remained the same, since the beginning of their creation.

We should not forget that man, like an animal, was roaming the bush with his bare body and gathering food with his hands unaided, like an animal, during the prehistoric period. Thanks to the early craftsmen, the early creative artist-designers, who were able to eventually fashion protective coverings from vegetable materials and the early sculptors who, with chipped stones, were able to produce hunting clubs and protective as well as utilitarian instruments. Also man began to separate himself from the animal kingdom by developing his instinct for beautification through painting on his cave wall, or engraving on his rock shelter human and animal activities. These early artists or creators, having exhibited their image of God, prepared the ground for what today have made us “subdue”, “replenish” and have “dominion” over all the things on the face of the earth. That is, this was how art marked the beginning of industrial revolution and modern technology.

Art as the Foundation of Technology

As already examined above, technology began with the prehistoric man, the first artist-designer, with the design of his stone axes, clubs and other tools. But with the development of civilization, the craftsmen or the artisans,

as they were generally known, began to play more noticeable roles in the development of modern technology. But what is technology? Fundamentally, the word technology, which is fast losing its meaning, is from two Greek words, *techne* that means art or craft and *logos* which means word or speech. The two words put together mean a serious discourse or deliberation on art.⁵³ The early artisans or technologists relied mainly on technique, form or design and task, what to be achieved, as their fortifying energy. As late as the 18th Century, the carpenters, metal designers or mechanics and the artisans, generally were the builders of “various steam engines, textile machines and iron bridges”.⁵⁴

Great engineers like Stephenson, Telford, Brindley and Brund who all produced works that became some of the greatest wonders of the world were practical men with great creative artistry. They were specially endowed with “common sense, great energy, creativity and design power”.⁵⁵ They were not scientists. In fact, the first scientist to be a recognizable force in technology in the 19th Century, was Justus von Liebig, the father of Organic Chemistry, in Germany, and the inventor of synthetic fertilizer.⁵⁶ Technology is design and design is art.

Developed technology asserted itself first in the art of building that was later known as architecture. In the medieval Europe, wood carvers, goldsmiths, stone cutters and blacksmiths were responsible for building houses. There was no discipline known as architecture; and when the word was first used in England in 1563, it was coined from the Greek word “architekton” which meant a chief craftsman or designer but later used to describe an expert in the art and technique of building.⁵⁷ In fact, architecture as a

professional title was first used by an artist and theatre designer, Inigo Jones, in the early 17th Century, after series of drawing experiments that made him explore the complex technicalities of architectural draughtsmanship in Italy. Inigo Jones later became one of the most recognized British Architects. The word “architect” was later exclusively adopted as a title by the members of the Royal Institute of British Architects.⁵⁸

Architecture was also the foundation of civil and structural engineering. Before the 18th Century, the word “engineer”, from the Latin word “ingenerare”, means to create or to make.⁵⁹ The word was used to describe those artisans or craftsmen responsible for building canals, dams, temples, palaces and roads, among others, and these people saw themselves as “performing artistic activities”.⁵⁸ Also, very essentially, the word was used for those with design ingenuity or prodigious creativity. When the silk spinning machine was invented in the 18th Century, it was assessed more for its artistic merit. D.D. Cardwell showed his reaction in this regard:

The Lombs had, by means of ingenious espionage, discovered the secrets of the silk throwing machinery in... North Italy. Once again, English technology was derivative... this time from those developed mechanical skills so characteristic of Italian genius and evidently related to artistic and architectural abilities.⁶¹

VISUAL ARTS

Visual arts as a term describes art forms like painting, textiles, ceramics, graphics and sculpture that one can only see to appreciate or enjoy and not heard, like drama, including mime, and music or read like literature.⁶² The arts as a word can also cover visual arts, music, drama or theatre, film, literature, history, languages and other humanities like philosophy and religion. However, visual arts as the subject of this discussion simply defines all the art areas now known as Fine and Applied Arts which by academic implication, also include the theories that are essentially integral to all the studio areas of Fine and Applied Arts. Other non-studio based areas of Fine and Applied Arts are purely theoretical. However, all the areas of Fine and Applied Arts are here graphically presented.

Fine Arts and Functions

Fine Arts, as a study, covers the areas of painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, art history, art education, fine arts criticism, art administration and museum studies⁶³. The studio areas of Fine Arts are primarily concerned with the production of decorative, aesthetic or beautiful things that appeal to the eyes or one's mood. In addition, works produced can serve social, political, religious therapeutic, historical, educative and generally humanistic needs. Works of fine arts have made history more historical or factual, alive and convincing through pictorial and sculptural documentation of events or historical as well as notable religious characters.

Before the invention of camera, the artists, or painters, particularly, were the only recorders, with utmost

photographic realism, of people's images and environment. From the beginning of civilization to our modern times, art has been playing this role. The evidence is overwhelming, and people are supposed to know this, mainly because of the way art related events or experiences have been oriented around them. But very unfortunately, servile colonial orientation, and therefore social art illiteracy, has brought sterility to their art consciousness. I will, however, here adventure into the obvious, starting with Christian religion, and particularly the Roman Catholic Church.

The students of Church History know very well that the Church of Rome, which later became the Roman Catholic Church knew the indispensable importance of art, particularly painting and sculpture, to CHRISTIAN EVANGELIZATION. For this reason, and starting from the first Pope, Saint Peter who died on June 29, 67 A.D. to the present Pope, art has continuously been put in the service of not only evangelization but also liturgy.⁶⁴ From 67 A.D. to about 90 A.D., when the apostles and other missionaries were seriously persecuted or even killed by the Jews and Pharisees, especially, various art works were commissioned to document the activities of Jesus Christ to inspire converts and the pagans. The artists were encouraged to produce works that could show the fear of hell and the love of heaven. From around 90 A.D. through the early Renaissance Period of the 13th Century to the High Renaissance Period of the 15th Century, the Papacy or the Basilica, the Seat of the Pope, remained one of the greatest patrons of art, both paintings and monumental sculptures. The situation has not changed till today.

During the High Renaissance Period, the services of hundreds of fine artists, particularly the services of two art

geniuses, Leonardo da' Vinci and Michelangelo, were employed to the maximum. Leonardo (1452-1519) the scientist, anatomist, painter, engineer, designer and architect worked for various churches and many nobles in Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence before he died. One cannot forget his painting, *the Last Super*, which is still treated as a reference and with reverence by the Catholic congregation, and *Mona Lisa* which the art world continues to acclaim as an allegory of beauty or excellence. Michelangelo (1475-1564), a painter, sculptor and architect, apart from his monumental sculptures in the various churches in Italy and his world acclaimed painting *Last Judgement* in the Vatican, was the person who designed the present St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. However, even today, it is very clear that art cannot be detached from the liturgy of the Catholic Church, for it has already become an integral part of worship. Among other religious art works, the Catholic cannot do without the statue of the Virgin Mary and works depicting the *Stations of the Cross*. Art forms are part of worship in other Christian denominations.

Also through fine arts, or the artists, generations have been able to know the physical characters and facial expressions of notable or heroic people in history. Through the artists, various FASHIONS or dressing modes of past generations have been known and preserved. Through them, we are made familiar with, for example, the SEMBLANCES of Julius Caesar, Socrates, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, St. Peter, all the Popes from 67 A.D. to about 1830, including two African Popes (St. Melchiades, and St. Gelasius), Erasmus of Rotterdam, Henry VIII, Martin Luther, William Shakespeare, George Washington,

Christopher Columbus, and many others.⁶⁵ Particularly from the 1st Century to the early 15th Century, the people whose images were painted or moulded accurately perceived the semblances of their subjects while those whose semblances were captured between the 15th and 19th Centuries achieved an unbelievable degree of photographic realism. But despite the contemporary camera culture, art portraiture still thrives because it has its own social-aesthetic, historical and economic values.

All over the world, works of art, particularly sculptures, have been proudly mounted as MONUMENTS in cities to be part of their history. From ages, notable Church leaders, kings or emperors, heads of state, military heroes, great philosophers, poets, scientists as well as humanists or philanthropists, among other great achievers, have had monumental statues raised for them in prestigious or special locations that attract attention. More than any literary documentation, this is the most visible and commonly acknowledged form of immortality. The tradition still continues vigorously today. No civilized nation plays with, or disregards, the necessity for sculptural adornment, because apart from its appealing environmental aesthetics, such monumental works are a strong statement on the nations' political, cultural, socio-economic and other historic achievements. Washington, D.C. is a very typical example of a city with greatly historic monuments, and this is why it is usually described as a city of monuments. Fine arts all over the civilized world are part of government, corporate or any institutional ARCHITECTURE. There is hardly any building under any of these categories that does not make art an integral part of its structure; either indoor or outdoor.

Indoor works are usually mural or canvass paintings as well as prints or textile designs. Outdoor or passage art works are sculptures in either marble, bronze or metal. It is only in Nigeria that sculpture works are usually made with easily perishable or cheap materials that still unfortunately make these works very expensive. About three decades ago, there was a government directive, following the advice of the society of Nigerian Artists, that all government buildings should make provision for art in their initial designs. This law has not been strictly followed. However, fine arts features beyond the above elitist domain, showing that art is not only for the privileged. That is, for AESTHETIC and EMOTIONAL purposes, fine arts products are also found in many individual houses, many of which are bought from the art hawkers or roadside artists.

Many people, particularly art connoisseurs, regularly buy art works from the professional artists either privately or during art exhibitions. ART EXHIBITIONS are not only for economic gratification, they are a way of showing artists' creative professionalism; a way of exposing their career to national and international audience; a means of acquiring fame which very naturally attracts to it great financial security. And of course, all over the world and for ages, art exhibitions have been a political or ideological weapon against oppression, vices or anti-social activities. They are a propagandist instrument of change. They have been used to uplift the spirit of the depressed and lift up those who were trapped in a deep valley of degradation and misery. The U.S.A realized this during the depression year when they freely gave art materials to the artists to help produce consoling images for America. The Igbo artists

also used exhibitions to propagandize the Biafran course, particularly in Germany.

What is very magical or very potentially celebrative about the profession of an artist is that, after a period, and this concerns only those who have really established themselves, it is the name and not the art that an artist sells. Such artists are numerous in every country. They are many in Nigeria. What this means is that, particularly in our age of art postmodernism, the work of a year one college student may be more visually appealing than that of an internationally known artist, a art buyer or collector will prefer that of the professional which can cost 100 times more than that of a student. This is saying here also that fine arts works can be a great INSURANCE, because works of art generally appreciate in value with time. A work bought for ₦5,000.00 today may sell for ₦50,000 or more next year. And this takes us to Art Auction.

Throughout the world, ART AUCTION is a very popular art event where the artists' professional standing and economic potential are easily assessed. It is about the most financially lucrative venture for the Auctioneers, the artists and the art buyers or collectors. Works that qualify for auctioning are usually those of the notable deceased artists, living art masters and those who are not masters but with works that are significantly precious, unique or distinguished for their material, conceptual, stylistic or experimental qualities. There are numerous Auction houses, particularly in Europe and the U.S.A. And art works costing billions of Naira are auctioned yearly. Art auctions usually attract buyers or bidders from different countries. There is still an adolescent tradition of this event in Nigeria, though the situation appears promising.

One major Auction house in Nigeria, owned by an expatriate, is the Arthouse Contemporary Limited in Lagos. About two years ago, I was invited to Lagos to open one of its auction events. I was happy to see that many Nigerians, considering their population there, were identifying with this tradition, though the buyers were still predominantly expatriates or visitors who came from different parts of the world; particularly the U.S.A., Europe and Asia. The Art House Contemporary Limited auctions have usually recorded the sale of between ₦80,000 and ₦500.000 per one work for both very young and old Nigerian artists; while the works of some art masters or notable artists have sold for between ₦500,000 and 9 million naira per one art work. These works were offered for auctioning either by the artists themselves or by those who had earlier bought the works of the artists. For example, works by some of our U.N.N. students who graduated just few years ago sold for over 1 million naira each. Each art work of the following artists, among others, has been sold as follows: Yusuf Grillo (9.5 million Naira), Bruce Onobrakpeya (6 million Naira), Uche Okeke (5 million Naira), late Ben Enwonwu (6 million Naira), late Aina Onabolu (9.5) million Naira) and late Ben Osawe (6 million Naira).

Apart from auction, fine arts graduates or practitioners can be self-employed, and, in fact, can be employers instead of being employees. This unshaken opportunity for SELF-EMPLOYMENT has made, and continues to make, many choose art as their career. With little or no financial support or without any capital, a fine arts graduate can set up a business infrastructure, in form of workshop or art studio which usually attracts heavy patronage. Of course, many are not interested in any private

enterprise. In fact, every year, many of our art graduates do not look for jobs. They are not interested. Even as students, many of them are sponsoring not only themselves but also their brothers and sisters. This does not mean, however, that art students should be excluded from governments financial support. But the government should know that art is helping Nigeria's chronic employment problem; because, as stated above, art graduates are not only self-employed, they are also employers of labour.

This is where I get worried about the number of art students the University of Nigeria gives the Department of Fine and Applied Arts every year during the JAMB admission. I think that the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.) should be made aware of this. Many departments, even in the Faculty of Arts, that have no employment or self-employment potential, like the art department, or that have not contributed more than art department as regards Nigeria's economic development, have been admitting more than double, and at times triple, the number of students given to art.

However, a fine arts graduate can also set up his own ART GALLERY where works of artists are acquired, displayed and sold. All the above professional tentacles of fine arts have clearly revealed how the products of these art areas have coalesced with the social, economic, political and religious experiences of a nation. Indeed, the relevance of art to national development, particularly industrialization, is more assertively echoed by Applied Arts.

Applied Arts: Utilitarian Dominance and Predominance

When considering the type of art that has totally and indispensably saturated the utilitarian needs of the society, or the only profession that has authoritatively imposed itself on the daily physical or practical needs of the people, it is art, and in this case, applied arts; that is, the specialized areas of graphics, ceramics, textiles, fashion design aspects of sculpture and metal design. Applied art, therefore, is the art form that is designed or produced by an artist-designer and which can be mass produced by an industry as an industrial product for utilitarian or practical use. This is why it is also referred to as an industrial art or the art for industry.

We are in the world of variety, and if there is no variety in our social, behavioural, environmental and material interactions, life will be full of hellish boredom; we will be back, as earlier stated, to an animal kingdom of no variety. Though some animals do exhibit a variety of behaviour, these are so limited and, in fact, cannot be considered a variety if compared with those of a human being. A human being can chuckle, smile and laugh. A goat can neither smile nor laugh, and anybody who has seen a goat laugh must himself or herself be a goat. What I am messaging here very authoritatively is beautifully condensed by Sir Thomas Browne under a sub-title “Variety is the Spice of Life”:

Diversity in God’s handiwork is something immediately apparent. The variety of plants, birds, animals, and insects is astounding. Just one hectre of tropical forest may

contain 300 different species of trees and 41,000 species of insects; three square kilometers may harbour, 1,500 kinds of butterflies; and a single tree can be home to 150 species of beetles! And just as there are no two people exactly alike, the same could be said of oak trees or tigers. ORIGINALITY, A QUALITY ESTEEMED AMONG HUMAN ARTISTS (emphasis mine), is an intrinsic part of nature.⁶⁶

God in His infinite CREATIVITY brought varieties to the physical world, as above understood, so also, the artists, applied artists, or the designers, in their God-given creativity, have brought varieties to the physical or the material needs of, particularly, the modern world; a very humble confirmation of my earlier submission that, in reality, an artist, more than any professional, is a true image of God. I here also assert that variety is not just “the spice of life”, according to this philosophically unadulterated cliché, it is in fact life, because a life without variety is not worth living. The applied artists have made it worth living for the modern society.

But very unfortunately, because our Nigerian society, generally, does not really know the meaning of art, not to talk of its functional significance, people ordinarily see art as a sculptural image or manipulation of colours, or portrait paintings of Heads of State, foreign dignitaries, Vice-Chancellors and other public and private individuals. The society also restricts its understanding of art to art exhibition rituals without even appreciating the continuous humanistic, recreational, socio-cultural, educative,

economic and political or ideological properties of these creative events. The artist-designers have made life more pleasant for people, mainly because all consumable utilitarian, industrial products are designed by artists usually known as industrial artists. It is good to start with the audience in this auditorium. There is no doubt that a great majority of our audience here have so taken art for granted that they do not recognize its most intimate relationship with them.

I can see neck ties, well designed plain clothes (fashion design) well designed patterned or decorated clothes (fashion design), cloths for interior art or decoration (textiles art and design and fashion design); in this hall are different denominations of paper currency (designed by graphic artists or corporate art designers); if we are still using coins, there would have been different denominations (designed by sculptors, metal designers or engravers); many women here have become more gorgeous in their dressing with plain or ornamented jewelleryes or metal necklaces, earrings, finger rings, leg rings (all designed by metal artists or jewellery designers); there are different types of beading (produced by fashion artist or in textile designer).

There are other products of the applied or industrial artists, in this auditorium. Some of these are plain decorated or ornamented keys, mobile phones, goggles or medicated eye glasses, musical instruments, wrist-watches, ceiling fans, shoes, fountain pens, biro pens, video recorders, cameras, among other industrial products. I must point out that Nigeria, with her consumerist culture, is very good at copying or reproducing, but usually poorly and with inferior materials, some industrial products without

knowing their design origins or sources. Shoes, hand bags, travelling bags and some clothes are examples. Many other genuine or original industrial designs and products have also been copied or faked, in some countries, with inferior materials and marketed in Nigeria as original products; without these fake industries knowing the fundamental or creative design foundations of such products. One must, however, note that all the above itemized products are not the same in their design categories. That is, each item also has its unlimited varieties, showing the very elastic creativity of an artist-designer.

Leaving this auditorium for individual homes, there are numerous industrial products, resulting from the initial paper designs of the industrial artists. Among these are various glass products like the ceiling decorative lamp or light holders, drinking glasses, beer or mineral bottles, glass containers for body perfumes, cream and lotions and other utilitarian glass products that have been manufactured ceramically, at times, by blowing processes. Television sets, computer accessories, wall clocks, some eating plates or utensils, food and water flasks, lighters or “cigarette lighters”, can and bottle openers, among many others, are all products of initial artists’ designs. It may shock many people in this auditorium to know that the industrial artists are responsible for the body design of all motor vehicles. Immediately a new car is launched, the artist-designers begin the process of designing for another model which is expected within one or two years. For instance, in the U.S.A., that is why we have Pinto 1972, Pinto 1974 or Mustang 1971 and Mustang 1973.

I must still explain further. When a company wants to produce any utilitarian product, or conceives an idea of a

product, it “performs market research (or survey), creates a design (art) brief, designs (makes preliminary drawings or sketches through industrial artists) and tests a prototype and implements an engineering process for manufacture”.⁶⁷ What should be understood here is that art is the foundation of all industrial products. In all the industrialized nations, nearly all manufacturing industries or companies have their own integral art sections for design purposes. These art units are variously called or named Art Room, Art Section, Art Unit, Design Room or Studio, Mechanical Art Studio, Industrial Art Unit, Creative Unit or Product Design Room.

One can continue to reveal the influences of industrial art on various social institutions like restaurants, recreational facilities, colleges or schools, offices, sports centres or events and theatres, but to avoid an exercise in monotony or rehearsing the obvious, I will focus on the health, medical and pharmaceutical sciences. There is no way students could be taught in these disciplines without using the products of industrial and other applied arts designs, particularly in the nursing and medical sciences which require various instructional or visual aids and instruments that are produced by the applied artists, particularly sculptors or materials and glass blowers. The artificial human skeletons, which are even very real to life, and other three-dimensional visual aids or instructional materials are good examples, among others. But there are other types of design which have further stabilized the conspicuous place of the artists in national development.

These are Graphic Design, Theatre Design, Floral Design, Fashion Design, Architectural Design and Interior Design which is also known as Interior Art or Interior Architecture. Of course, there are also Landscape Design,

Lighting Design, Universal Design, Sustainable Design and Ergonomics Design, all of which have heavy architectural content but with great art or artistic input. These will not be discussed in this lecture.

Graphic Design, all over the world, has been an integral part of commerce, which, simply defined, is the art of buying and selling. Graphic designers help promote and boost the sale of industrial and other products in some ways. For instance, most industrial or factory products are sold to the public only after they might have been beautifully packaged. The graphic designers are responsible for designing these packages in form, typography and colour. For the protection of the products and for visual appeal, packages have been an important means of attracting consumers to commercial products. The graphic designers also help advertise products in the print media like newspapers and magazines by producing the captivating, at times exaggerated, linear drawings or colour illustrations of such products.

The adverts can also be in forms of leaflets for mass circulation and enlarged street billboards where passers-by and motorists can easily recognize the products. The graphic designers are greatly patronized for the production of various political, cultural, educational, social and religious works. Invitation cards, certificates, letter-heads and, as already mentioned, currency or money designs, are the comfortable professional territory of the graphic artists. Of course, though like others who have specialized in other areas of fine and applied arts, graphic designers are highly proficient book illustrators. This way, the graphic artists, or other draughtsmen, have helped bring quicker understanding and clearer knowledge through illustrative

drawings that abound in various books or published materials all over the world.

The graphic artists are responsible for all the multi-variety of beautiful alphabets or typefaces that have been fed into computer. That is, from A to Z, each letter in higher or lower case, has different forms that are suitably adequate for commercial, educational, corporate and typography needs. The illustrative or diagrammatic symbols, pictures and patterns in a computer are also constructed by the graphic artists or creative artists. These artistic efforts are professionally and globally known as “computer graphics”. The graphic artists are also responsible for the lay-out, pasting and typography of published newspapers, magazines and other mass produced printed materials. Though computer graphics is now being employed in newspaper publication, the efforts of the graphic artists are still very paramount.

Theatre Design is complex in that it depends on the theme, character, period and cultural background. However, generally, theatre design takes into consideration space, costume, props, sets or stage scenery and make-up. Many artistic hands are usually involved in theatre design and stage lighting, particularly as regards “rigging, focusing and plotting” and moreover, fine and applied arts are an integral part of drama or theatre⁶⁸.

A lot of design energy goes to Floral Design, in that it is an excellent imitation, if not reproduction, of nature. The floral artists are masters of the craft and art of artificial production of natural or organic environment. With painstaking and design accuracy as well as the harmonious language of hue, floral artists or designers have made their works even more natural than nature. This is also mainly

because they are very strictly obedient to the principles of floral design which take into consideration colour, form, rhythm, balance, proportion, texture and unity.⁶⁹ With colour, synthetic or fiber materials, fibre artists have made artificial flowers an important or relevant part of global interior design.

There is also Fashion Design, a subsection in many colleges of art or in some universities, which entirely depends on drawing. All fashion industries have or employ very creative artists or fashion designers who have made the contemporary multi-variety of fashions possible. Without them, there can be no dress variety or fashion styles.

Though this is essentially the professional domain of an architect, the interdisciplinary nature of architecture as well as the integral influence of art on architecture have made many fine and applied arts artists enter very comfortably into Architectural Design which is basically architectural drawing.⁷⁰ As should be understood already in the earlier discussion, many artists from the High Renaissance period to the present have been known for their architectural design mastery. This is why today in Nigeira many artists are also known as notable architectural designers and architects. Interior Design, also known as Interior Art, Interior Architecture and Interior Decoration, is another specialized area of design that continues to grow with socio-economic development. Interior Design is a career that has occupied many artists all over the world. Interior Design deals with the planning of interior spaces of a home and other business offices, choosing the materials, colours and appropriate furniture as well as organizing such an interior in a way that is aesthetically and functionally

appropriate. The interior designer or decorator is also responsible for the types of appliances and accessories needed, in case of home, hotels, among others. That is, in terms of infrastructure, decoration, colour and space design or space allocation, an interior designer or artist is fully responsible.⁷¹

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me further inform you here that the careers of, or the job opportunities in, fine and applied artists are more than the ones discussed above. That is, a creative or formally well trained fine and applied artist is never, never professionally limited in his choice of employment; this is mainly because, as already understood, of the naturally expressive and elastic nature of the art discipline. This is why graduates of art, fine and applied, can also get jobs as forensic, criminal, detective or reconstruction artists, judicial or court artists, therapeutic artists, tattoo artists, animation/cartoon artists, cartoonists, make-up artists and engravers.

Except forensic and judicial art experiences that are not yet part of Nigeria's professional experiences, unlike the situation in all the industrialized nations, all these professional tentacles of art are already being practised in Nigeria. A forensic, reconstruction artist, a reconstruction sculptor or painter is also art criminologist whose duty is to help detect crime or a criminal. This way, he is also known as a crime detector. His main duty is to help produce accurate pictorial or sculptural semblance of a criminal at large. His artist efforts are always based on oral or written descriptions of the criminals given to him. That is, based on descriptions, he produces a portrait which is featured in major print and electronic media for the public's attention or action. Various documentaries on crime have shown

how successful this profession is, particularly in the U.S.A and Britain.

An artist, especially a painter and a draughtsman, is part of the judicial processes in the economically advanced nations. Usually, private press or photographers are not allowed to document visually some court proceedings. They are not even allowed into the courts, except those who work only for the courts and whose pictures are only for the courts' private collection which, by law, should not be made public. It is the responsibility of the court artists to capture very pictorially important court events which are later published in the print media or showed in the television for public's consumption. Many American artists have become syndicated for this.

Therapeutic artists are employed to work in the psychiatric homes, hospitals or institutions for the emotionally challenged by teaching them art or making them engage in various artistic activities which, according to science, naturally help their emotional stability. The therapeutic artists know the type of art each emotionally disturbed person should be occupied with. By keeping them busy with art, they are stopped or prevented from wandering in imagination. That is, they are brought from that very distant outside there (unreality) to the very near inside here (reality). Particularly in the economically developed countries, tattoo art has become a big business that continues to attract big capital to the tattoo artists. The art industry which is just becoming a part-time art business in Nigeria, continues to magnetize patronage from the sportsmen and women, great musicians, actors and even criminals in the Euro-American worlds.

We all watch animated cartoons on the television without knowing the creators of these cartoon episodes. A cartoon is made up of mechanically animated succession of drawings that are with human voice or language. This type of cartoon can be linear, two-dimensional or sculptural and three-dimensional. They are all created by the animation artists. It may interest one to know that a five-minute cartoon animation film can require over 500 drawings. Cartooning, an integral part of newspaper or magazine publications, is another occupation of an artist. All over the world, cartoons, which can be a humorous or outright serious caricature of subjects, have for ages been a socio-political weapon against tension and society's ills. It can be a jocular or instrumental presentation of the artists' subjects. It is also a straightforward, graphic and bold commentary on or critique of the society.

There are also make-up artists, at times known as cosmetic or beauty artists, whose professional activities never lack patronage. Make-up art is one of the money generating artistic ventures in Nigeria today. In Europe and the U.S.A., patronage is so high that people have to constantly book for appointment. Make-up or cosmetic art is based on the technique of painting and the principles of colour manipulation; facial anatomical features are also given special consideration. But like many informally learnt but hijacked professions in the developing nations, various beauty salons now engage in art cosmetism which is however very limited or inadequate in creative professionalism.

Perhaps art engraving is one of the art professions that daily increase in popularity and patronage. Generally, specialists in an aspect of sculpture as well as graphicists

can easily be engravers. Apart from various industrial metal or iron products that need engraving for identification, safe keeping or protection from theft, the art of engraving has become more relevant to the contemporary society, particularly through various sports like soccer basket ball, hockey, base ball, lawn tennis, among others, that necessarily require trophies.

Though the tradition is just beginning in Nigeria, in the well developed countries, engravers are always put on stand-by during important sporting events that require the award or presentation of trophies for winners that are usually in the first, second and third categories. Immediately winners emerge, the engravers begin their business of engraving names of the winners, the sporting events and dates of the events on the trophies for immediate presentation to the winners. Unlike the reasons for engraving other items, sports engraving is for honour, prestige and immortality. It is a historical documentation of usually competitive and well laboured achievement. In fact, there is hardly any modern profession or professional practice that does not directly, indirectly and consciously or unconsciously consume art.

The reality of art's social indispensability, therefore, becomes very assertive and with utmost clarity with the fact that art is the only profession that any normal human being cannot do without in the public. In the public, or even outside one's house, one can do without talking, singing, moving and dancing for a certain length of time without any problem. One can also do without eating, staying under architectural structure for a long time, taking medication or breathing for a second in the public. But one cannot do without wearing clothe or clothes in the public or even in

front of one's residence for a second. The clothes are textile designs, part of applied arts. Anybody, particularly in this auditorium, who disagrees with this factual statement is very well allowed to take advantage of this situation to undress fully, even for a second.

CONCLUSION

In my discussion so far, I have addressed the foundation of many Nigerian's uninformed and misinformed attitude to art from the colonial to the late postcolonial periods. I have unambiguously analysed how art, through art practitioners and lovers, was able to disengage itself from the age-old colonial and post-colonial shackles. All the appropriated instances in this lecture have also clearly shown how art is indispensably relevant to the circulatory system of modern development; therefore a tool of industrialization. That is, the lecture has revealed the palpable and integral place of visual arts in human, physical and spiritual needs. Very importantly, it has anatomized the functional and career multiplicities, and therefore job possibilities, of art in our modern society; this is without even discussing art teaching and art administration which offer jobs for thousands of art graduates in Nigeria.

Without doubt, the story of visual arts in Nigeria, is that of the Rejected Stone that eventually became the most stabilizing part of an architectural structure. It is however hoped that my presentation here will enlighten several minds that are already captive to societal pseudo conclusions about art. This will be a way of having ablutions for various "sins" they have consciously or unconsciously committed against art.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please permit me to recall, very impartially, three unforgettable experiences of my life as a teacher in this University of Nigeria, Nsukka. One was the death of my last child, Kolawole Oloidi in 2007 at the age of seventeen and half years. He is not here with us physically but, I know that he is with us spiritually. He is with his God, and may his soul rest in perfect peace. Amen. I cannot forget, the year, 1980, when three academics were recommended for “double-jump” from Lecturer II to Senior Lecturer by their faculties. From the Faculty of Education was Dr. Samson Ojo Olaitan (now Professor) who presented 22 publications for Faculty Appraisal and kept 6 publications for future appraisal.

From the Faculty of Arts was Ola Oloidi with 14 publications for Faculty appraisal while keeping behind, for future appraisal, 4 publications. The third person who was also recommended for promotion from Lecturer II to Senior Lecturer had only 1 publication for Faculty appraisal. Dr. Olaitan’s case for double-jump failed in the Central Appraisals Committee and my own also failed. We were given our normal Lecturer I position with effect from 1980. The other academic with 1 publication got his double-jump and became a Senior Lecturer in 1980. The experience of my wife in the School of General Studies, U.N.N, some years back is my third unforgettable experience. It was during the ASUU national strike when ASUU directed that all academic staff in the Universities should not teach and conduct examination. My wife, Jumoke Francisca Oloidi, was acting for her Head of Unit, late Associate Professor Francis Anyika who was on leave. The ASUU strike also coincided with the examination of the G.S. Humanities. Considering what my wife had been

suffering in the hands of about three staff of the School, I told her to disobey ASUU and conduct the G.S. examination, while on my part, I decided to obey ASUU.

My judgment was incited by my conviction that if all the academic staff in the School of General Studies, including my wife, did not teach, only my wife would be singled out for punishment, not within the School of General Studies, but by some of those who were “close to power” at the period. My wife obeyed me and disobeyed ASUU by preparing question papers and inviting invigilators from various Faculties. The notices for this examination were what the ASUU executive saw and came to my wife’s office, politely expressing dissatisfaction for her action. The ASUU delegation immediately came to my office to ask me why my wife behaved thus.

I told them that she was acting according to my instruction, because “some of you definitely know what this woman has been suffering for years for doing nothing in the hands of the people you know”. I was satisfied with their satisfaction. But what happened the following day that the ASUU came to politely challenge my wife? My wife, along with three of her friends who were also victims of my wife’s oppressors, came to my office with a letter that read: “Dear Mrs. F.J. Oloidi, could you please report immediately in the Investigation Unit of the Security Department to EXPLAIN YOUR FAILURE TO CONDUCT EXAM as demanded by the Administration?”. What a terrible world? I felt sorry for my wife and for humanity. Mr. Abugu, the Chief Security Officer was embarrassed when we went straight to his office, not the Investigation Unit, with the letter. “Who sent you this letter, and what is our business with this?”, he said. The

man began to beg my wife very emotionally. He knew the source of the letter but he refused to disclose this. But wait a minute, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The exam, which she had really prepared to conduct as explained above, and for which she was invited for not conducting by the security, was not yet due. The exam still remained two days at the time she was invited by the Security Department for “failure to conduct exam”. Of course, I wrote the Vice- Chancellor, Professor C.O. Nebo a letter captioned “Intimidation and Oppression of my Wife: Jumoke Francisca Oloidi”. The Vice-Chancellor in his reply apologized on behalf of the Security Department and, by implication, Administration. Ladies and Gentlemen, I think you can now see the sincerity in the above claim that my wife was really for over a decade under serious victimization. But she has forgiven all, not only because this is her nature, but also because it is divine. Moreover, situations have changed for good for her, thanks to the present administration and God. May God also forgive all of us here and there in Jesus Name.

Ladies and gentlemen, I must also address one important thing that has, for over two decades, been bothering me. This simply concerns the design of the University of Nigeria’s academic cap. The time has come for the U.N.N. to design an undergraduate academic cap that necessarily reflects the positive culture or traditions of, particularly, its immediate environment. I am expecting a design that one can see and immediately associate it with the University of Nigeria. The academic caps of the University of Lagos and the Obafemi Awolowo University are good examples, among others.

A new, creative, well designed and iconographic cap that perfectly acknowledges, in a highly simplified and not exotic form, the ideology of the University of Nigeria, will clearly beautify, deodorize, rather than artificialize, the appearances of our undergraduate students, particularly during graduation. They will no more look like graduates of sewing institutes, catering schools and others whose caps even appear to be more aesthetically appealing than those of the University of Nigeria.

However, to end this lecture, I must embrace some nostalgic references. It still seems like yesterday, when towards the late 1970s, I was trapped in the majestic fold of the following people who, like me, were mostly recruited from either the U.S.A or Europe: Professors S.O. Onyegegbu, D.C. Onyejekwe, A.O. Odukwe, N.I. Ikpeze, N.F. Nyama, Martins Obi, R.N.C Anyadike, E.P. Abanime, late Rev. Father C. Okolo and S.N. Chiejina. Others were Dr.S.V.O. Shoyinka, T.A. Durojaiye, A.E. Umo, Dr. C. Mbakwem (Mrs. Aniebo), Virginia Okonkwo (Mrs. Chiejina) and Dr. Mrs. U.O. Amazigo, among others.

I cannot forget the late Professors Emmanuel Obiechina, Ogbu Kalu and O.O. Enekwe particularly Obiechina, who helped read some of my early academic works. What about Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, Dr. (now Professor) N.A.Eteng, aka 'Familism', and Miriam Okadigbo, now Professor (Mrs.) Ikejiani-Clark and Professor Nzimiro who all vibrated such oratorical excellencies that well suited my own attitude in this effort. I cannot forget them. To the creative, progressive and lively minds in my department, I will continue to cherish your good wishes for me. Without you, my stay here would not have been what it is today. Can you believe that all the

present academic staff of my department, except one, were my former students? Deo gratias.

My faculty colleagues who always treat me like somebody and whose love for me is genuine and unpolluted: may God bless you. All my numerous postgraduate and undergraduate students here present, you are immensely appreciated; same applies to those who have left their stations to support this intellectual commune, particularly Simon Ikpakronyi and Architect (Professor) Bili Koleosho, among others. All the Faculty of Arts students, male and female, as well as other students of UNN who are always, unavoidably, “harassed” by me with impunity, thank you for accepting me for what I am. I thank Egwuda-Ugbeda and Professor A.N.Akwanya for some contextual contributions to this lecture. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. P.A. Ezema, the Acting Head of English and Literary Studies, for painstakingly going through the final draft of this presentation.

It is now time to frontally focus on the granite-rooted, solidly planted and majestically standing pillar of my life. The pillar is not my second half at all, it is in fact my total self; inseparable, unique and unadulterated. The pillar is the embodiment of my achievement and the hope of a better and more fulfilling tomorrow. It is the flower that refuses to fade, “come rain, come sunshine”. The spiritual vibrations of this pillar are the fortifying energy of my family and the shield against negative forces. This pillar is my wife and the mother of my children, Olumide, Olufemi, Kemisola and the late Kolawole who have also stood for the greatness of my family. Her name is Francisca Jumoke Oloidi, the first lady, according to Professor Emeka Otagburuagu.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to give substance to this intellectual gathering today. Above all, I thank the Almighty God for enabling me and my family live to see this occasion. Thank you.

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4. Ola Oloidi; "Growth and Development of Formal Art Education in Nigeria,1900-1960", *Transafrican Journal of History, Nairobi*, Vol.16, 1986, p.108.
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7. "Record of Sunday Service", Roman Catholic Mission Esa-Oke, now in Osun State, September 8,1935.
8. "Record of Sunday Sermon,' Catholic Mission, Agba, September 29, 1935.

9. Michael Babarinde, 87 years, a C.A.C. Member in Ado-Ekiti. Interview conducted on July 4, 1979, in Ado- Ekiti.
10. Ibid.
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12. See Paulinius Emejue, *Mbaise School*, Unpublished M.F.A. Thesis, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, UNN, 1978, pp. 7-17.
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18. See Ola Oloidi, "Nnamdi Azikiwe in the History and Development of Modern Nigerian Art," *Modern Nigeria Art in Historical Perspective*, Ola Oloidi, ed., (Abuja: Art Historical Association of Nigeria, 2004), pp.12-31.
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20. Longman Dictionary of contemporary English, p.i1057
21. Ibid, p.669.
22. See Ola Oloidi, 1981.
23. Copy of the Letter by K.C. Murray dated 5th July, 1950
24. Copy of Enwonwu's Letter (Uche Okeke's possession) dated July 3, 1950.
25. Copy of Letter dated September 2,1950.
26. F.A. Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria* (Paris: Unesco, 1973), p. 25. Also see Ola Oloidi, "Growth and Development of Formal Education in Nigeria", p. 120.
27. Ola Oloidi, 1986, p.120.

28. See Ola Oloidi,
29. Television Interview by NTA with M.K. Ajuluchukwu in 1978; also my Interview with Uche Okeke in Nsukka in 1977.
30. “Your Excellency,’ a letter by Uche Okeke, Written to Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dated April 17, 1961.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. *Symposium on Nigeria Contemporary Art, Catalogue of Art Exhibition: Nsukka School* (Nsukkan: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1976), p.1.
34. Ibid.
35. Ola Oloidi, 2004, p.12.
36. “This Torch of Development” a Short Address by Nnamdi Azikiwe during his visit in 1961 to the Enwonwu College of Fine Art, U.N.N.
37. Ola Oloidi, 2004, p.12
38. Ibid.
39. Facts about the Art Students’ activities at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology. Zaria (NCAST) were richly collected in the late

1970s from many of the former students like the late Professor Solomon Wangboje, Professor Uche Okeke, Yusuf Grillo, Demas Nwoko, Bruce Onobrakpeya, etc.

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Bruce Onobrakpeya, informal interview with him in Lagos, 1980.
43. See *Uche Okeke: Drawings and Prints, 1954-1972* (Nsukka: Institute of African Studies, U.N.N, 1972).
44. Ola Oloidi, "Uche Okeke and His Creative Dynasty in Nigeria" *The Triumph of Vision: An Anthology on Uche Okeke and Modern Art in Nigeria*, Ikwemisi, et. al. eds. Lagos:
45. Copy of Letter written to one of the O.N.D.art graduates by the Principal, Nigerian Peoples High School, Shiro St near Jibowu, Lagos, in 1968.
46. Interview with Koleosho, Lagos , October, 2010
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48. Ola Oloidi, copy of his "Criteria for Appointments and Promotions of the Fine Arts Studio Lecturers", 1978.Department of Fine and Applied Arts, U.N.N., p.3.

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50. Ibid.
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52. Ibid. p.6.
53. *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 10, International Edition, Dunbury, 1979, p.357.
54. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol,1, 1974, p.21.
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60. Ibid.
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62. Though mime is a gestural action or act that requires no words, the fact that movement or action is involved makes it an art that one can hear.
63. Music is not included here as believed by some scholars.
64. John Laux, *Church History: A Complete History of the Catholic Church to the Present Day* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930), see Appendix.
65. St. Melchiades, an African was elected the 33rd Pope in 311 A.D and died in 313 A.D; St. Galasius, also an African, was elected 51st Pope in 4292 A.D. and died in 496 A.D.
66. “In search of the Greatest Artist”, *AWAKE*, November 8, 1995, p.9.
67. *Design and Fashion*, Spring, 2007, p.5.
68. Ibid; *Design and Fashion*, Fall 2006, p.9; *Design and Fashion* Fall 2005, p. 12.
69. *Design and Fashion*, Spring 2007, p.5.
70. It should be noted that all the departments of architecture in colleges and universities have courses in conventional drawing, and graduates in fine and applied arts are usually employed to teach the courses.

71. In the industrial nations, “business” buildings are constructed by architects, leaving large sections of the interior open, undersigned, for the interior artists.