

Visual Art Culture: Economic Necessity in Southeastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Ndigbo are acclaimed for the quality of their art works including creative and technological inclination which have metamorphosed into their present stature and creative ingenuity in international scene as exemplified by Igboukwu Bronze discovery in 1938. Other notable examples are creative exploration and fabrication of war machines during the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970. However, a visual art inspires innovative technology and development of imaginative and creative ideas that may anchor sustainable development. Different researches and approaches have taken place overtime without comprehensive and significant studies in this direction hence the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collation including unstructured interview were used to achieve the objectives of the study. Some of the findings include: ndigbo are creatively endowed and have placed themselves in artistically and technologically in international world map today. Conclusively, visual arts should be integrated and harmonized to reflect its usefulness and relevance to human and national development. The study recommends that visual arts culture should be imbibed and sustained for entrepreneurial benefit, and sustainable development. This is followed by other recommendations for futuristic focus

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Background to the Study

The study shares the view that in the contemporary world, most societies or countries may not have attained their economic strides or stature by neglecting or throwing to the winds salient areas of human endeavour that may build and develop human capacity. For any nation to develop economically, socially, scientifically and technologically, focal attention must be paid to the needful and key areas, including capacity building which in the long run galvanizes scientific, industrial and technological advancement of the nation, thereby paving the way for sustainable economic and national development. However, this may not be the case with majority of the developing economies where if any development agenda is not linked with politics, looting, corruption, avarice and shortsightedness such agenda is considered null and void and prohibitive.

Democracy and politics have become a stupendous pedestal on which underdevelopment in all facet, booms. For example, a developing economy, endowed with great human and natural resources, including, notable economists, accountants, marketers, business resource managers, architects, Visual and creative artists of note, should not be contesting and contending with sustainable national development. The study submits that Nigeria has huge potentials and capacity to be in the list of the best ten economies in the world if the right values are significantly pursued.

Southeastern Nigeria must key in to the modern technology apparatus to further develop and improve their creative and technological prowess as exemplified by Igboukwu Bronze discovery of 1938 by Thurstan Shaw at Isaiah Anozie's backyard. Such artistic and creative endeavours could catapult the nation into one of the best economies in the world. Again, Nigeria, particularly Southeastern region must be culture and value driven in order to carve out a niche in finding a dependable solution to the economic woes in the country and the region at large.

Realistic economic blueprint of the neighbouring states like Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi States could be emulated, sustained and developed for futuristic focus. Development of human capacity must be phenomenal and again, production in relation to the wider economy should be massive. Apart from economics, which in the opinion of Mish (2008) is a social science which studies resources allocation, distribution and consumption of capital investment and of management of factors of production, Hornby (1995) considers economics as the principles of the production and distribution of goods and services and development of wealth. There are other areas of human endeavour that galvanise production as well as distribution of good, services and development of wealth, which should not be relegated or ignored. The study considers such areas as visual and creative arts which include architecture and others.

Visual Arts

Visual arts may be considered as a huge source of entrepreneurship and technological advancement. Therefore, should not be ignored or relegated to the background when issues, measures, policies relating to economic advancement are considered, visual arts is a massive route to knowledge and self-discovery. It helps individuals discover and rediscover themselves

in terms of potentials and other capabilities that could help them grow and contribute effectively to the growth and development of the society. Some of the distinguishing characteristics of human being are the special abilities to create, imagine, invent, structure and restructure, construct and reconstruct new ideas. These he uses in contributing to the effective development of man and society. Preble and Preble (1994) believe that all society have produced objects and rituals that extends communication and meet physical and spiritual need of the people. One may therefore, suggest that visual arts constitute inseparable characteristics to human and national development.

This is in line with numerous contributions it makes to the overall development of man and environment. For example; visual arts could instill discipline, motivation, beautify, entertain, inform, persuade, and heal as well as transform man and society, however, visual arts as a creative and imaginative enterprise, forms a bedrock of human, environmental, scientific, industrial and technological pedigree and growth of any established society.

Ikwuegbu (2010) shares the view that development of human beings through imaginative and creativity based curricular, provided by the visual arts will help in actualizing human development strategy, rather than focusing on oil, politics and few other glorified areas of human endeavours. Visual arts could be harmonized packaged and, reintegrated to reflect its usefulness to the society. Nigeria, should look beyond oil and tap from the benefit other areas of endeavour could provide, such as visual arts, architecture and many others. One may suggest that diversified economy may not be negotiable in the context of this research and contemporary Nigeria situation. The study shares the view, therefore, that national development goes beyond oil, politics and acquisition of illicit wealth at the expense of less privileged, ones. However, national development may be considered when people in the country have enough food, - and entire workforce not dependent on one source (oil) and income among the people and poverty massively reduced. In support of this, Ikwuegbu (2010) Citing Meier who agrees that development is more than just the acquisition of industries, but includes such ideals of modernization as rise in productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical know-how, improved institutions and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy approaches.

In view of these, therefore, one may consider visual art culture as a huge catalyst to human, economic and national development, figures 1-2 could help for purpose of clarity.



Fig. 1: Ibekwe Emmanuel “The Warrior” IMT Enugu, Yr 2009 direct modelling, 180 cm © Osita Williams 2019



Fig. 2: David Chimezie “My Tradition” IMT Enugu, Yr 2010 direct modelling, 150.06 cm © Osita Williams 2019

Visual arts have intrinsic and extrinsic perceptual appeal which, to a greater degree constitute significant pedestal for creativity, and imagination, thereby paving way for entrepreneurial, technological, and economic breakthrough. However, it is the position of the study that visual arts encourage development of architecture, engineering, entrepreneurship, creativity, imagination, technology and others which could anchor growth and development of economic power among nations. Again, one may consider the realistic option of developing new knowledge from one's environment which may be used to define man and strong statement may be made of man by the environment.

Environment, therefore becomes an inseparable phenomenon that may not be completely divorced from economic, technological and scientific development as noted by Ojewuyi (2011) Osita (2015) and Chima (2018). One may safely suggest that environment, culture, value, attitude and orientation play symbolic roles in economic development of any nation with reference to southeastern Nigeria. Ideologically, a systematic construction and development of new knowledge based on synthesis of collective ideas may be of paramount economic importance to the developing economies, because, in the opinion of Aniakor (2012)

knowledge is power and may not be divorced completely from a commodity of the academic marketplace. Visual arts, therefore, becomes dynamic and systematic route to knowledge and could be advanced beyond what it is at the moment in southeastern Nigeria. Creation of enabling environment for creativity, imagination, and new knowledge may be a realistic therapy that could galvanize and anchor capacity building which may ensure sustainable economic and national development.

The study shares the view that southeastern Nigeria should develop an economic blueprint that could synergise economic and human development. Such measures may inspire and trigger sustainable economic, human and national development. Creativity and visual arts and self-sustenance may not be compromised as they appear to be the most viable option to economic growth and development. Few examples of visual arts culture are below as in Figs 3, 4,



Fig. 3: Osita Williams A. “Untitled”, ABSU, Yr 2013 Oil on Canvas, 90 x 120 cm © Osita Williams 2019

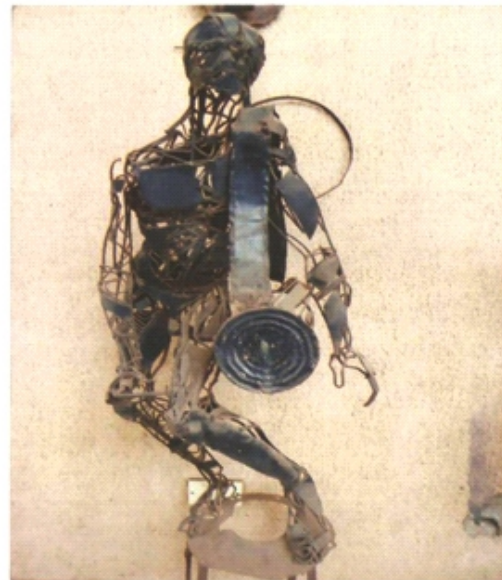


Fig. 4: Mgbejiofor Eric E. “Drummer” IMT Enugu, Yr 2003 Metal, 90 cm © Osita Williams 2019

However; the study shares the view that creativity is colossally pivotal to economic development. In the opinion of the study, a visual art inspires creativity and imagination and provides effective platform for creative exploration that could promote growth and capacity building. It provides significant pedigree for sustainable economies and national development as well as technology and entrepreneurial incubation that may catapult development which Nigeria is massively in need of today.

In support of these views "The Pride of Black Race" in Ojukwu's first post war speech in February 1994 citing Udeagha (2018) where he highlights that in the three years of Nigeria/ Biafra war, necessity gave birth to invention. By those time bombs, rockets and others were built, Ndigbo creatively designed and built their own delivery system. They fabricated and maintained engines, machines and technical equipment's. Ndigbo extracted and refined petrol with their own indigenous technology called the "Biafran pot" They built and maintained airports and air strips. They maintained them under heavy bombardment. They spoke to the world through a telecommunication system engineered by local ingenuity. They created and built armored tanks and cars. Within three years they became civilized and most technologically advanced black people. These creative ingenuities were achieved with ruthless efficiency. However, Gowing (1995) opines that,

The art of Igbo Ukwu bronze of 1938 which was discovered by Thurstan Shaw is also a monumental testimony to the' artistic prowess and ingenuity of ndigbo. This artistic prowess brought ndigbo into limelight and gave ndigbo international recognition till date. Therefore, creative endeavors like visual arts must be encouraged and sustained in a society that craves and strives for economic and technological advancement.

Figs 5 and 6 are other examples of visual arts culture



Fig. 5: Okechukwu Opara. "Beggar" IMT Enugu, Yr 2008 Metal, 210 cm © Osita Williams 2019



Fig. 6: Ugwuagbo Alphaeus O. "Leadership tussle", IMT Enugu Yr 2011, Direct Modelling, 180 cm © Osita Williams 2019

Conclusion and Recommendation

One may acknowledge, with shame that in contemporary Nigeria situation, any issues, not related to politics and illicit acquisition of wealth is not taken serious. However, for creativity, technology, economy and entrepreneurship to strive effectively, there must be cultural and economic value driven orientation which may galvanize and inspire huge growth and development of the country.

The study recommends that Nigeria, in fact Southeast geopolitical zone should develop a blueprint of economic redemption and growth and a culture of enterprise aimed at massive development as against the backdrop of "I must rule syndrome" by those whose kernel are cracked by benevolent spirits. Again effective combination and integration of economic and visual arts may astronomically result to dynamic and massive sustainable economic, technological and national development. Human development through visual arts enterprise, particularly ceramics, sculpture

(Bronze casting, Brass Smithing) Architecture, Textile technology could massively remove or reduce unemployment and boost technology as well as the economy.

Visual arts, if well placed, and massively positioned could turn the wheels of technology, industry, human capacity and economic growth and international recognition economically, culturally, creatively, artistically and entrepreneurly.

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