

Studio Principles and Practices: A Case of Artist Marketing, Collection Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper investigated how the grasp of the principles of studio art enhances mastery of art as a profession. Equally studied are the factors that guide artists in the sales of items and the challenges they are exposed to in the art business. The method used was a simple descriptive survey, data was gathered along that line from practicing artists, gallery owners, and private art collectors. The interview instrument was used very well. The knowledge of the principles and practice of studio art is very vital in studio art practice, collecting artwork and selling it in Nigeria is not a simple business as many collectors do not understand the art they collect and lack full knowledge of the business of art collection or the potentials. This paper recommended capacity-building workshops to be organized by the National Gallery of Art (NGA), other prominent galleries, and the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) from time to time.

Keywords:

Studio Art, Principles and Practice of Art, Descriptive, Art business, Capacity Building.

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Background to the Study

Arising from the fact that the Nigerian economy is a challenging one, Nigerian artists, like most other professionals face so many challenges. The challenges cover but are not limited to instability in governance, civil unrest emanating from different armed groups, and lack of social amenities. Amongst the professionals, the artists, educational, and work sectors have been the most challenged, whereas they are supposed to be endowed with a double charge of life to live under these circumstances (Nzoiwu, 2018). Again, it has been observed that artists with little or no knowledge of studio principles and practice cannot effectively engage in art marketing, and collection of artworks, nor achieve better prospects in the world of art practice. However, the knowledge of studio principles and practice enables sustainable professionalism. Hence, it is of great significance to study studio principles and practice to enhance artist mastery of marketing art, and collection and educate artists on the prospect that awaits their practice in the future. This paper, therefore, focuses on investigating how the knowledge of studio principles and practice can aid artists to tackle marketing artworks, and collection challenges and achieve a better professional prospect in the art field. It also attempts to look at aspects of studio art practice and survival in the Nigerian environment, this is as a result of the conditions under which Nigerian artists are raised. The study discusses situations in which the artist could survive under the above-mentioned problem and struggle to make a livelihood and proffers possible suggestions on how to fully understand and overcome those challenges relating to the unavailability of affordable art materials for the artist to execute their works, marketing strategies, and prospects. The method used was simply a descriptive survey, data gathered from practicing artists, gallery owners, and collectors formed the basis of the conclusion. However, for the context of this study, it is necessary to briefly explain the following terms.

Studio

A studio is a space of discovery, where collected and selected objects research materials, and experiments resonate with each other and provoke reflection and thinking (Sjohlum, 2013). It could also be presented as a space of material engagement and enchantment, a workshop, where a large part of the methodology practice is based on the reoccurrence of manual labour. In other words, a studio is a space where artist persistently practice their craft until practical knowledge becomes embodied skill and the physical art of making art becomes second. Sjohlum (2013) opined that experimentation and creativity in the studio are seen to rely on productive and ambiguous tension based on the knowledge practices of contemplation and elaboration, critical thinking and bodily engagement, instruction, and improvisation. He concluded by saying that the studio is a personal laboratory.

Becker (1982) sees the studio as a space both separate and not, it is a space where not just objects for exhibitions materialize but where calculation and strategies for dealing with the wider art world are thought of, thus, a studio is a space or area where artworks are birthed, manifested and originated into a physical object or subject while (Daniel, 2011; Chare, 2006; Buren, 1970) concluded that a studio is an imagination and knowledge chamber where artists engage in practice based on privacy or reclusion, material

production, knowledge learned, scholarship, civilized pursuit, based on learning. Conclusively, a studio is a space where art principles and practice lead to productivity in art.

Studio Principles

Studio principles are a description of how an artist organizes the elements of art, the artist can apply principles of design in the process of art production in a studio. The artist uses this principle as a guideline to achieve visual balance through the organization of all the elements of art. This principle of design includes proportion, emphasis, rhythm movement, repetition, contrast, variety, unity, and harmony. Studio principles are guidelines and rules that an artist employs in a studio during the working of artwork. There is a need for exploration of the principles of design during the art process of studio practice to help artists become self-directed, creative and engage in critical thinking, and express art perfectly.

Studio Practice

Studio practice means the way artists work and develop their ideas, and subject matters, conceptualize possibilities, influence, and inspire the style of their work. Studio practice is dependent on the period and culture/environment. The processes that a practicing artist engages in before the final production of his work could also be explained as studio practice. An artist's studio practice involves the artist's exploration of ideas, developing, refining, resolving, as well as the presentation of the final work. All of these processes listed above are what make a studio practice.

Art Marketing

Dave (2020) defined art marketing as a systematized process of creating awareness and interest in an artist or artwork that leads to a desire to engage the artist, gallery, or company to own its product, use its services, or all of the above. Dave concluded by saying that marketing art is the ability to communicate your story to the people who have an interest in what you have to say. Businesses (large and small), use marketing to communicate their concepts, promote their brands, identify new prospects, and strengthen bonds with existing customers. Artists need to develop marketing techniques to advertise and sell artwork, their quest to be successful will lead to making plans to identify goals, strengths, and resources to advertise and create awareness that will help sell their art. Such goals are:

1. Developing a systematic goal to create awareness of the art both physical and online.
2. Sell through solo and group exhibitions.
3. Advertise and sell at trade fairs/airports and festival arenas.
4. Open galleries where artists sell to buyers.
5. Balance marketing, creative time, and goals.
6. Ensure that the art is relevant to time and at the appropriate market where it is needed.

Art Collection and Challenges

A private collection is a privately owned work or valuable items. From the museum or art gallery context, the term could signify that a certain artwork or object is either owned by that institution or loaned from an individual or organization either for temporary exhibition or for the long term (Wikipedia). Hence, the artworks are collected over time for marketing as it relates to this research.

The challenges faced by artists during collection include a lack of trust and understanding of the trade among the studio artist, their agents, and art galleries. The listed factors have become crucial issues in art marketing/collection and have affected many artists who are practicing art marketing in cities (Kunde, 2016). Kunde further mentioned that the urge to survive and economic hardship have made several artists run into fraudulent art agents that appear to be genuine. Some agents he mentioned, capitalize on the desperation of the artist to sell at all costs to defraud them. Some agents or galleries sometimes refuse to pay artists after their works are acquired or sold, resulting in the artist visiting the collectors severally without being paid. The artists are exploited to the detriment of the progress of their art. Perhaps, this is the reason Kunde (As cited in Ojo, 2004) opined that this phenomenon has not only demoralized so many artists but has led to their losing total patronage and retiring to the farm as a choice or other vocations.

Prospects

The prospects of a practicing artist are the target market that is envisaged. Presently, most contemporary artist targets big cities like Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, or international markets to achieve breakthroughs. Hence, the possibility of targeting big cities is rewarding unlike selling locally. The prospect of improving the artist's marketing and collection challenges could be achieved by:

1. Engaging in research to discover a lead.
2. Meeting and talking to people on different occasions and environments.
3. Creating awareness about their arts.
4. Engage in solo and group exhibitions which will announce the artist and his art.
5. Explore their creative potential in visual arts by using media, pigments, and non-pigments to create artworks that will be marketable to potential agents, galleries, or markets that are readily available to the artist.
6. Kunde (2013) thinks that the master artist should partner with the National Gallery of Art (NGA), Society of Nigerian Arts (SNA), and other relevant organizations such as non-governmental bodies to ensure the success and development of art as well as the well-being and economic standard of the master artist.

Methodology

The method used in this paper is simply a descriptive survey, data was gathered through investigation and interviews granted by private art collectors, practicing artists, and gallery owners. The interview instrument was used effectively, and the findings led to

conclusions drawn. During the process of data collection, Delta State was used as a case study. Hence, practicing artists, art collectors, and private gallery owners within the state formed the population of the study. The cities covered include Asaba, Warri, and Ughelli respectively. Six practicing artists, one gallery owner, and one art collector were interviewed at Asaba. Two practicing artists, one gallery owner, and one art collector were interviewed at Warri, while one practicing artist, one gallery owner, and one art collector were interviewed at Ughelli.

The data gathered as a result of the personal interviews showed that the respondents had similar experiences. The outcome of the interviews showed that:

1. Practicing artists collectively experience low patronage due to a lack of appreciation by some individuals, not creating enough awareness by artists, non-payment of artwork collected by private gallery owners/private collectors, low turnout in art collections, and many others.
2. Private collectors and gallery owners enumerated the problems of low patronage hence not meeting up with payment or settling of art bills collected from practicing artists.
3. Economic policies and cash flows are also some challenges encountered by collectors.

Among the art workshops and galleries visited their responses include:

Godex Art thinks that the “ Art business has not been so favourable recently unlike what it was when the collectors and art lovers patronize them regularly. Most collectors he claims purchase for a year without payment. When asked if he would continue with sales of art, he responded by saying “he would also love to open an art school, where he hoped that educating people on the importance of the profession would help to increase its prospects.

Okwunuzor Art: this practicing artist and gallery owner has long gone into graphic design/ printing. She claims that low patronage and lack of art appreciation have made her close up her gallery but now does her printing at her residence. When asked if she would later open a gallery in the future, she said no, hence her first love of owning a gallery is no longer there.

Pencil-Printing Art Gallery: the proprietor of this gallery responded by saying that over the years' art sales and art collection have not been encouraging. He stated further that rather than art sales appreciating, it has been depreciating thereby discouraging the art business. He mentioned that at times, some works of art stay 3-4 years without being sold or collected, hence he has also delved into printing and graphic designs as a way forward. To him, printing posters, signposts, wedding cards, receipts, and logos among others pays more than a painting or collection of artworks for sale. He gave instances with graphic designs in which the customers pay immediately for those services.

Genesis Art: The proprietor of Genesis Art remarks that there is low patronage of works of art. He mentioned that sometimes for years he would not sell his paintings. He also said that he used to have a customer from Auchu who collected his art but due to delays and non-payment, he had to stop his painting practice. When asked what his prospect is, he said that he has gone into practicing graphic design/ painting to survive and that he would rather dwell on that.

Frank Art Hub: this art hub was established in Asaba in 2018. They never had an office but operated from his home using Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, among others, to promote his sales of art. Initially, the hub had high patronage, with several followers online who referred people to him. However, from the year 2021 till date, it has not been the same, since the advent of online picture framing, glass stainless painting, etc., came into existence, it has not been business as usual. People now prefer to patronize roadside framing artworks rather than real oil painting art, thereby devaluing art and its importance. Presently, people feel that if they can buy cheaper paintings and pictures on the side, why will they need to go for expensive paintings? Although, those that appreciate paintings, still patronize him once in a while. He promised to continue in art but will venture into new areas to discover new ideas to promote his practice.

Alenosi Art Gallery, Warri: The art gallery business has not been easy but we are still managing to cope, adding other aspects of art such as printing/ graphic designs as a way forward. He mentioned that he will continue as a practicing artist, with another alternative. The artist claims that selling and buying art may not be a necessity but a second option in business, one needs to have other sources of income to be an art seller or collector. It is not a basic need like food, customers only buy art to decorate or beautify their homes and offices after budgeting for food and other basic needs. Hence, he/she buys art from leftover money.

Bruce Onabrakpeya International Art Gallery: Bruce Onabrakpeya is a renowned artist with national and international recognition. He is the founder of the Bruce Onabrakpeya art centre in Lagos and Ughelli. As outlined by Mudi Onabrakpeya an Art resource agent and brother to Bruce Onabrakpeya, the art business has been favourable. Mudi stated further that the art centre is known globally, hence, it has experienced international and local patronage, but not without some little challenges. To Mudi, the annual harmattan workshop often held in February and August has also added to the success of the art centre.

Conclusion

The researchers have x-railed the meaning of studio art principles and practice and studied practicing artists about marketing, collection challenges, and prospects. It is important to note various details given and claims made to improve prospects of art marketing and its challenges, based on interviews conducted and findings made. Many practicing artists interviewed decided to leave the business of art marketing, and collection and better their prospects in other aspects of arts such as printing,

photography, and graphic design, only a few were willing to continue with the hope of developing ideas to improve sales and collection of arts. Lastly, recommendations were made on how to improve strategies of art marketing and collection to achieve a better prospect.

Recommendations

Based on the interview and findings on the areas to improve art marketing challenges and to achieve a worthwhile prospect in the field of art profession, the researchers recommend to practicing artists, art collectors, and gallery owners, the following strategies as outlined by Nerve (2020);

1. Be grounded and knowledgeable in studio practice and principles. Studio practices have to do with expertise in studio practical activities, hence, being grounded and knowledgeable in studio practices best describes the various activities of art production and experience which is exhibited by an artist to achieve an art piece in a particular space known as a studio. This process features the elements and principles of art.
2. Create a powerful visual tool online, capable of defining the artist's strategy, and giving comprehensive information about art to the prospective buyers. This process involves creating awareness of the proposed work or artwork to be sold, which exposes all about the art to be marketed.
3. Tell good stories about their art, share passion, and stand out from the competition to attract new art buyers. The above strategy could be carried out through an advert or catalogue that will best sell the art to the expected buyer.
4. Develop a personal brand to be known in art making, these could be a style, a logo, or a name for which the artist is known or will be for in the art-making Industry. These will make his/her work outstanding anywhere is to be marketed.
5. Adjust spending strategy to achieve optimal business results to address exploitation and frustration by agents. This is a situation where an artist develops a template to have a fixed price for all his artworks that are available for marketing.
6. Introduce different skills/approaches necessary according to market trends. A situation whereby the art looks out for trending or latest styles, approaches, demands, and needs in the society and to it through art production to meet demand in the environment and his/her immediate surroundings.
7. Market with purpose and value to keep the customer. The artist should not extort or sell substandard works to keep their customer, whatever is being sold should be valuable.
8. The artist should have or create art buyers' journals, content marketing, calendars, etc. to increase sales and always explore ideas to update online strategies.
9. Artists should partner with the National Gallery of Art (NGA), Society of Nigerian Arts (SNA), and prominent Art galleries to chat about a way forward in other to enhance their prospects. They can be achieved by attending organized seminars, workshop art contests, and awareness programs wherever it is being organized.

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Interviews

S/N	NAME	ADDRESS
1.	Okwunuzor Art	Chinedu Ezenyili Street, Asaba, Delta State
2.	Pencil-Painting Art Gallery, Asaba	11, Odogandi Street, Behind Asaba Stadium, Asaba, Delta State.
3.	Streamland International Art Gallery, Asaba	19, Ogbeilo Street, Asaba, Delta State.
4.	Moi Art Gallery, Warri	Airport Road, Warri, 330102, Delta State.
5.	Creators House of Art, Warri	136, PTI Road, Warri, Delta State.
6.	Alenosi Art Gallery	Block 35, Flat 15, DDPA Estate, Warri, Nigeria
7.	Genesis Art	266, Nnebisi Road, Asaba, Delta State
8.	Frank Hub	Temple Clinic, Anwai Road, Asaba, Delta State
9.	Matthew Golden Art	Destiny Plaza, Airport View, Okpana m Road, Asaba, Delta State.
10.	Bruce Onabrakpeya Art Gallery	Otor-Eboh Road, Agbara-Utor, Delta State.