

Arts and Women in Development

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Abstract

Review Article

This paper sets out to examine arts and women in development. Historical methodology of research is employed that is: observation, documents on past and present events, literature and internet information's. The statistics of practicing Nigeria women artists in some fields compared to their male folks forms a gap. Nigeria women artists in the 21st century are just trying to bridge the gap now. Women are now paying unflinching attention to show case themselves and their works side by side their male folks, these have led to some impressive exhibitions, shows nationally and internationally in groups, solo, and stage performance. However, only few detailed research works have been done on Nigerian female artists and documentation of their contributions socially, economically and educationally. The main aim of this paper is to high light the significance of Nigerian women artists and their contributions to development. Achievements of Nigerian women as pioneer professors in Nigeria and Africa, and their excellence in other areas of arts is also examined. It is not possible to discuss every area of art; the arts alone can be classified into 13 categories: acting, announcing, architecture, fine arts, directing, animation, dancing and choreography, design, entertainment and performance, music and singing, photography, production and writing.

Keywords: Art, Development, Pioneer, Representation, Women

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian women have been engaged in the arts traditionally for thousands of years. Growing up as a child, the researcher has seen women making and using art works traditionally for various purposes, from the woven and traditional indigo dyed wrappers our mothers tied, to body adornments, to the beautiful intricate designed pottery wares for food, storing water and for locally brewed beer. Art is diversified in periods, materials, forms, subject matter and expression. In the 21st century Nigeria, in terms of arts, and development, women are just gaining popularity nationally and internationally. In 2015 at a discussion organized by Art Forum Africa (AFA) held in Lagos, the question where are the women in visual Arts? Was the focal point of discussion. Creating a Legacy of Nigeria Female Artists (2016) opines that, Women in Art have suffered under representation and have been written out of the history books. Women since the time of the likes of Ladi Kwali, have witnessed and have been engaged in enormous challenges ranging from struggling for space with their male counterparts, female gender responsibilities, inequality, marital responsibilities, religious implications and obligations, creating an identity, experimenting on materials, creating a name, developing new techniques,

low patronage and lack of sponsors and financial constraints to mention but a few. Few women artists have been able to scale through these enormous problems, creating a niche for themselves in Nigeria and on the international stage, while others have not been so fortunate. Creating a Legacy of Nigerian Female Artists (2016) reports that, Bukola Oyeboode, an art critic and writer, affirms that 'Afi Ekong a female artist and owner of an art gallery was acclaimed as the first woman to hold a solo exhibition in the late 50's in Nigeria and more people remember Ben Enwonwu today than they remember Afi Ekong'.

This Paper therefore aspires to examine arts and women in development in Nigeria. Qualitative research methodology was applied in carrying out this research, which involves the use of observation, historical documents, literary and internet materials were explored. Observation according to Sarandakos (1998) is one of the oldest, reliable and effective ways of data collection. It is not possible to discuss all areas of the arts in detail, few examples where selected and used to illustrate the content reality of discussion, to memorialize representations of Nigeria's women in arts and development. The scope of discussion was narrowed down to Nigeria.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS:

ARTS

The word art means many different things to different people. Some people use the word to refer to fine arts including classical and established forms of dance, music, theatre and visual arts. Some people use the word to refer to anything beautifully made, but it's not all art works that are beautiful. Art is the special expression of ideas, feelings, and values in perceptible form, something that can be perceived (Creating a Legacy of Nigerian Female Artists, 2016). Arts can be expressive and can effectively convey meanings or communicates ideas in visual forms; artistic expression is a way for people to share their most important values and beliefs. The arts alone can be classified into 13 categories: acting, announcing, architecture, fine arts, directing, animation, dancing and choreography, design, entertainment and performance, music and singing, photography, production and writing. (Gaquin, 2008). As an art history scholar, art is defined "as everything made by Man for Man using man-made materials for man's life"

DEVELOPMENT

According to Merriam Webster's English Dictionary, development is the act or process of growing or causing something to grow or become larger or more advance; the act or process of creating something over a period of time; the state of being created or made more advanced([https://www.merriam-webster.com>deve-](https://www.merriam-webster.com/deve-)).

"Several famous psychologists, including Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg describe development as a series of stages. A stage is a period in development in which people exhibit typical behavior patterns and establishes particular capacities" (Spark Notes:Development Theories of Development.).

REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

Structuralism emanated from the 19th century, while some emphasized contextualized approach in the sense that they emphasized content over form. Some of the female artists have been able to adapt the iconographic approach incorporated into their works, like using ethnic motifs, images and symbols to interpret or design their art works, a typical example was Ladi Kwali, the famous indigenous ceramist, known nationally and internationally for her indigenous pottery works that earned the admiration of the western world.

ARTS AND WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

The writer also observed that, women visual artists that were trained in the formal School way started with the emergence of art schools that spanned over 60 years ago. The writer also observes that aesthetically, characteristics of women visual artists in the 21st Century, included freedom to alter imagery in composition radically; they were also able to stress process over content. The styles of execution of women artists since 1980 can be classified as expressionism, abstraction, and fantasy in different dimensions. Artists,' works belong to one or more currents, the female art works became richer, in their different specializations. The women visual artists became more adventurous in their artistic expressions. The female artists were free to create new styles and have freedom to define their own themes and terms. Some visual art works though mute, expresses the artist's intentions as though speaking. So many art schools produced skilled, distinctive academically trained women artists and have continue to produce more that have contributed to the developments of the arts in Nigeria. Modern sculptures done by women artists now include assemblages or environment; junk sculptures made from fragments of automobile/old machinery/discarded stuffs etc. Other factors that influenced Nigerian female artists include urbanization, internet incursion, formal education, residual effects of colonization and modernization. Taremba (2016) opines that, in many ways' modernization has changed the face of Africa, positively and negatively in equal measure. Hare Krishna Deka, an Indian government service retiree asserts that, an Indian sage Bharata Muni defined 64 types of art and dance is one of them (Quora Reading Digest, 2017). Dance before the 21st century for women professionally was a no-go area, the art of dancing either professional or as a discipline compared to other arts was looked down upon.

According to Kealinohomoku (1970):

"Dance is a transient mode of expression performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space, dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements, the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group".

Ameh (2016) posits that, Kafayat Shafau-Ameh started dancing in 2006, and broke the Guinness World record for the longest Dance Party. Kaffy (2016) further

stressed that, dance wasn't one of the highly revered art forms, but Kaffy changed that mindset and opened doors for dancers all over Nigeria. While Akinwale (2015) reports that, "Kaffy says dancers will rule Nigerians showbiz industry someday". Dandaura (No Date) reports that, Arnold Udoka is one of Africa's foremost dance artists, choreographer, scholar and director of the National Dance Troupe of Nigeria, Udoka asserts that, "newness in Nigeria contemporary dance is due to the fact that, it has risen to meet social, economic and environmental challenges in a post- modern Nigeria." We have more professional female dancers now, before Kaffy started dancing, dancing was seen as an act of looseness for females to be dancing professionally, but Kaffy's contribution changed this perception and more women are dancing today, this really has helped in the development of dance in Nigeria.

Art is a language, a tag, a signature and an identifier of people's culture. Aralola Olumuyiwa the number one female *gangan* drummer in Nigeria, plays the Yoruba talking drum, she has been playing this unique musical instrument for the past 27years."Ara" as she is popularly called which means "Wonder" in the Yoruba language has performed nationally and internationally, she is a cultural ambassador to Latin America and China. Ara as a female drummer, broke and invaded the male dominated field of drumming in arts and has contributed to the development of arts within and outside Nigeria, more women are exploring this area of art due to her performance to date. Ara: Famous Female "Gangan" drummer (No Date), Ara asserts that," Culture is very strategic to human existence; culture is an identity that shows the originality of a person." Folabalogun (2017) in *Art History as a Tool for Cultural Development* opines that "Culture is a sum total of a man, which includes Dance, Food, Arts and Craft, Language, Music and Musical Instruments, Myths, Norms, Values, Religion, Architecture, occupation, Costumes, physique and geographical location." No culture is static, culture evolves, and effort must be made so that important aspect of our culture in arts does not die. Music and dance are an important aspect of our culture. Music has served as a stimulus for developing dance expressions in every culture.

Linton (No Date) asserts that:

"While there are no sounds that can be described as inherently unmusical, musicians in every culture has tended to restrict every sound that they will admit, Music is an important element, and is

the organization of sounds and silence into forms that carry culturally derived meanings, cultivated for aesthetics or utilitarian Purposes".

There is a wide genre of Nigerian music from traditional to contemporary like gospel, afro beat, pop, juju, reggae, hip hop, jazz, traditional and soul music. Nigeria music scene have a lot of women artists participants, too numerous to mention. The female musicians express their creativity in freedom to create new styles, imagination, expression, period; personalities of music composers, modernism, content and process of music are some of the elements responsible for development of dance expressions in art and women development in Nigeria. Tiwa Savage is one of the prominent Nigerian female singers; she is a role model and has inspired other females to take up singing as a career. Nigerian female singers and their achievements, innovations and contributions to the growth, progress, spread success and enlargement of music in Nigeria nationally and internationally and have inspired other upcoming artists to take up singing professionally. By show casing the female artist through the act of singing, they are also creating awareness and a good image for Nigeria entertainment culture. Music is the machine (stimulus) that creates the development of the art (expressions). Dance-acting can be considered to be art. Music and Dance are art forms of entertainment.

The researcher view's writing as an Art as well as Science, art in the sense that the formation of letters starts with dotted lines, the letters, the words; pronunciations are all art in the sense that, it is creative and expressive. While writing as Science is use for scientific research test, that yields results whether positive or negative it is also creative and expressive. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a female Nigerian writer of novels; she has won several awards internationally in recognition of her works. Her works have been translated into over thirty languages and has appeared in various publications (About Chimamanda/Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie). Below are some of her awards with dates and names of books (novels).

1. In 2007 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award (Half of a Yellow Sun)
2. In 2007 Women's Prize for Fiction Award (Half of a Yellow Sun)
3. In 2008 MacArthur Genius Grant Award (Fiction)
4. In 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction Americanah (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>).



Fig: 1 Chimamanda Adiche

Nike Okundaye is a renowned female traditional artist and painter of repute, a Nigerian female artist, with no formal education but has lectured at Universities like, Harvard, Columbus, and Edmonton, Ohio and Los Angeles amongst others. Nike gallery houses 7,000 works, the artist has carried out exhibitions and workshops nationally and internationally in Nigeria, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy and United Kingdom. She has travel widely all over the world and accomplish greatly as a successful artist. From 1981 to date, the artist has received awards and invitations to visit countries to represent Nigeria, to train people and to exhibit her art works. The Artist art centers have trained more than

3,000 young Nigerians and her art galleries are located in Oshogbo, Lagos and Abuja. Two presidents of the United States, Bill Clinton and George Bush were so impressed with her work that, during their tenure and visits to Nigeria, asked personally to meet the artist. The artist was actually asked to decorate the room that, the visiting United States president George Bush stayed in Abuja, Nigeria (Nwodo, No Date). Nike Okundaye has contributed immensely to the knowledge and development of art and has made remarkable achievements and accomplishments at various stages as a female artist to Nigeria and the world at large in her area of art specialization.



Fig: 2. Nike Monica Okundaye(Founder and Owner of Nike Art Gallery)

In Fine Arts, another Nigerian female artist named Njideka Akunyilli Crosby (Painter), in November 2016, Njideka Akunyili Crosby's painting, an acrylic coloured pencil and solvent transfer on paper 60 by 72 inches (152.4 by 182.9 cm) set a new auction record at Sotheby's New York, titled 'Drown' which sold for \$1,092,500. This record will be the second that the visual artist have broken in the space of two months (Creating a Legacy of Nigerian Female Artists, 2016). This achievement coming from a Nigerian is remarkable and a great contribution to women development in the art world and internationally as a record breaker.

Peju Alatise is another female artist and a Nigerian; she holds a degree in Architecture, a poet and specializes in the use of mix media. The artist's subject matter covers issues like identity, female perceptions and reflections of themselves and society. Peju Alatise has exhibited nationally and internationally (<https://theculturetrip.com>, No Date). According to Top 10 Contemporary Artists from Nigeria (2015) Nnenna Okore, a Nigerian, born in 1973, works in the United States teaching Sculpture in North Park University (Chicago). The artist draws her inspiration from her childhood in Nsukka, her works speaks of transformation and decay. Nigerian female artists nationally and internationally, at various stages have contributed to the growth and advancement of art in their different areas of specialization over a period of time within and outside Nigeria.

Nigeria in history produced sixty-six pioneers' professors in different fields of education and eighteen out of these pioneer professors where women, these women became pioneer professors in their areas of specialization in Nigeria and a few were pioneers professors in different educational fields in Africa, three out of the eighteen professors are mentioned for the benefit of this paper. These professors serve as a source of encouragement, inspiration and role model to the girl child and women in general. Nigerian's first female professor ever- Professor (Mrs.) Felicia Adetoun Ogunsheye. Another pioneer Nigerian female professor of Yoruba studies in the world-Professor (Mrs.) Omotayo Olutoye and yet another pioneer Nigerian female professor of History-Professor (Mrs.) Bolanle Awe (Know Your Professors, 2017). The eighteen professors contributed to knowledge, history, and development of education, they served as role models to the female child. Other women too numerous to mention, in different spheres of life also affected and influenced the course and development of females in arts and education in Nigeria.

Photography has been a field associated with men and dominated by men in Nigeria, but women are fast rising and have proven to be just as outstanding. Modern photography demonstrates and extends the vision of the viewer through abstraction, imagination and fantasy. Fantasy is the inner eye imagination. All the above characteristics helped the female artists during the present period and also aided the growth of the arts and contributed to advancement of photography by women. An example of a Nigerian female photographer is Yagazie Emezi. According to Aliyukwaifa@dailytrust.com (2017) Yamazie Emezi is a documentary photographer; her focus is on preserving African culture. The artist graduated from New Mexico, on her return to Nigeria as a visual curator for Bialere, a digital platform. Her works has been commissioned by Nigeria and international companies including, Guardian (Nigeria), Huffington post, Al Jazeera, Union Bank, Essence Magazine and MTV.

In April 26th 2018, Friends of Creator Foundation (FCF) marked this year's World Intellectual Property Day Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, has designated April 26th as world Intellectual Property Day, by honouring eight Nigerian women, who have distinguished themselves as creators and innovators in their respective artistic and inventive labours, including a young female who is the best in Engineering. The outstanding Nigeria women include Joke (Jacobs) Sliver, Nigerian famous actress, Veno Marioghae, for her contribution to Nigerian music industry with her song 'Nigeria Go Survive' the song is over two decades ago, the song acquired the status of an anthem even till today. Professor Mojisola Christianah Adeyeye, the newly appointed Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) for her innovative contribution to pediatric healthcare. Kafayat Shafau-Ameh, popularly known as Kaffy, for creativity she brings to choreographing and popularizing dance as an artistic form. Happiness Egobundu Akaniro, for her works as a writer and publisher. Okiemute Ighorodje, for the creativity that distinguished her during Season 9 of MTN's talent hunts initiative Project Fame West Africa. Isoken Ibie, currently based in Canada, for her creativity as an actor, film producer, and talk show host and the best female student of the Faculty of Engineering, Delta State University (Ifowodo, 2018). Contributions of women to the various stages of growth, expansion and advancement in arts in the 21st century shows a remarkable and a significant transformation in development.

The western art world is beginning to focus on contemporary female African artists and their creative expression. These artists analyze the complex notions of beauty and feminine body through different media. Exploring issues of femininity, beauty, body, race, gender, submission, power and territory, their works range widely over an assortment of contemporary subjects, (Olivetti, 2016). Women in performance art also experienced the movement. Art is not static, it evolves, and the female art of yesterday cannot resemble that of today. The following recommendations might probably be of importance where applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerian Academic Art Historians, Critics and Connoisseurs should endeavor to project and write more about women in arts.

A museum for Research and documentation for Nigerian women artist's expressions can be established as they evolve.

Scholarly magazines or journals documenting the times, styles, impacts, arts of women artists in Nigeria and Diaspora can be introduced and monitored closely.

CONCLUSION

The implication of this paper is that Nigerian women in the last hundred years (100) have evolved from one stage to another, contributing immensely to the development of Nigerian art in different spheres of life. Some of the factors responsible for these artistic developments includes Literacy and modern Education, incursion of computer and internet exposure, technology, availability of modern forms of entertainment, changing attitudes of hostility towards women, changing value systems, urbanization, modern economy and promotion of culture. The 21st century Nigeria women with some of the examples given in the paper for content reality have

always been part of development of Nigeria right from the hunter period in history of 6000B.C to the present 21st century. The concept of development and the involvement of women are almost as old as civilization. The Nigerian women through arts have been able to project, preserve, conserve, innovate, spread the Nigerian language, literature promotion, and performing art of various genres and promoting visual arts to meet the present needs of the society in Nigeria is development. The Nigerian women artists have been able to use their different skills in arts to foster education, maturing into enlargement, expansion, growth and improvement in their areas of specializations. The progress, success, spread and build out can be seen in different areas in Nigerian arts. Nigerian women artists have demonstrated a powerful and dynamic role in terms of contributions in these modern times, in the stage of modern-day art economy with the price tag of their works and sales recorded as outstanding, a feat that has not been achieved by some women artists from other countries. Nigerian women artists are striving to break the male dominated art world. The Nigerian women art works, representations explore tradition and modernity, the women artists in Nigerian are still perceived by so many as secondary to their male counterparts, because of low exposure and low numbers of practicing women artists in some fields, but despite the expression, power of representation, theme, and authority displayed by the Nigerian male artists, the women also are now master of the game and have come a long way. The contributions of Nigerian women in different fields of arts and the process of growing become larger and more advance over a period of time, this is a huge achievement and development on the part of Nigerian women. To try to map out the contributions and achievements of Nigeria women in arts and development is like trying to count the stars. The role of Nigeria female artists in the development of art cannot be over emphasized; their contributions permeate all spheres of life.

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