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# The Challenges Of Sculpture: It's Prospect For Sustainable Development

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## ABSTRACT

Sculpture is one of the major areas of art that promotes the conservation man's history. It is also a catalyst for communication ideas; at the same time summon aesthetics to man's environment through a strong knowledge and magnificent arrangement of the visual element in synthesis with the principles design. Sculpture is the three-dimensional art work which is physically presented in the dimensions of height, width and depth. In Nigeria, contemporary sculptures have been notable for preservation of cultural heritages and served symbols for most social organizations irrespective the financial affluence it portrays. Recently, there are suspicions on the contemporary sculptors with the notions that contemporary sculptor have lost their grip on the essence of art. This Study therefore explores the challenges of contemporary sculpture in Nigeria and also research into its prospect on sustainable development. For effective documentation, the qualitative research was employed and the data relied on the secondary source, although few data were collected from the primary source where the need arrived to concretize the information giving out from this study. The theoretical framework is the empathy theory of art by Legend Leo Tolstoy. The study concluded that Poor Self Confidence, Poor Viable Educational Program Educational Program on visual art practices Sculpture as a Profession, The Hike in the Price of Materials and Equipment are most of the major challenges that have been causing the dilemma confronting contemporary sculpture. However, government funding, self-confident and good knowledge of the relevance of art and its entirety will help boost its sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Sculpture, empathy theory of art, cultures

## INTRODUCTION

Sculpture is one of the major areas of art that promotes the conservation man's history. It is also a catalyst for communication ideas; at the same time summon aesthetics to man's environment through a strong knowledge and magnificent arrangement of the visual element in synthesis with the principles design. Sculpture is the three-dimensional art work which is physically presented in the dimensions of height, width and depth.

The term "sculpture" have been used mostly by different people to describe large works, which in most cases are identified as monumental sculpture, meaning either or both of sculpture that is large, or that is attached to a building. But the term properly covers many types of small works in three dimensions using the same techniques, including coins and hard stones, carvings, coins, and covers others such as terms for small carvings in stone that can take detailed work.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is the empathy theory of art. This theory was propounded by Leo Tolstoy, a Russian born theorist and world acclaimed literary legend among other accolades. Tolstoy defines art according to Popova (2003:1) as a Form of consciousness and frames the essential role of art as a vehicle of communication and Empathy. Popova adds that the ability of art is based on the fact that a man through his sense of hearing is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. It is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of teachings and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based. Popova further adds that Tolstoy calls this core quality of art as "infectiousness" and upon the artists' ability to "infect" others depends on the very recognition of something as art. Here, the researcher of this study have heard the other people lamenting on suspicions that the contemporary sculptors contemporary lost their grip on the essence of art. Therefore as a sculptor, has received the same emotion that moved those who expressed it knowing too well that if nothing is done, the profession might experience sharp decline. Hence, embark on this documentation that explores the challenges of contemporary sculpture and submits its prospects for sustainable development.

### **What is Sculpture?**

Sculpture is the term used to describe three-dimensional artworks. Traditionally, sculpture was created using permanent materials such as stone, metal, clay, ceramic or wood although works made from durable material such as stone were more likely to survive over time whereas sculptures made of wood such as TOTEM POLES were less likely to survive. Contemporary sculpture can be made from any kind of material: stone, metal, light, sound, found objects, people or even the site itself. It can also comprise no materials. Sculptures can be permanent such as the monumental sculptures and statues honoring famous people and events, situated in prominent positions in city spaces. They can also be EPHEMERAL, TEMPORARY, PERFORMATIVE or TRANSIENT depending on the artist's intentions, the context in which the sculpture came about and its purpose. (Carrol 1999)

Sculpture in stone survives far better than works of art in perishable materials, and often represents the majority of the surviving works (other than pottery) from ancient cultures, though conversely traditions of sculpture in wood may have vanished almost entirely. In addition, most ancient sculpture was brightly painted, and this has been lost.

Sculpture has been central in religious devotion in many cultures, and until recent centuries, large sculptures, too expensive for private individuals to create, were usually an expression of religion or politics. Those cultures whose sculptures have survived in quantities include the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, India and China, as well as many in Central and South America and Africa. The Western tradition of sculpture began in ancient Greece, and Greece is widely seen as producing great masterpieces in the classical period. During the middle Ages, Gothic sculpture represented the agonies and passions of the Christian faith. The revival of classical models in the Renaissance produced famous sculptures such as Michelangelo's statue of *David*.

Modernist sculpture moved away from traditional processes and the emphasis on the depiction of the human body, with the making of constructed sculpture, and the presentation of found objects as finished.

### **Types of sculpture**

Talking about the types of sculpture, basically, we have the Sculpture "in the round", and relief sculpture. Note, more exploration of new media by the contemporary artists may have sported out more recent type. Below are

Sculpture "in the round", free-standing sculpture such as statues, not attached except possibly at the base to any other surface, and the various types of relief, which are at least partly attached to a background surface.

Relief is another type of sculpture that summons a very high aesthetic to man's environment. Relief is the usual sculptural medium for large figure groups and narrative subjects, which are difficult to accomplish in the round, and is the typical technique used both for architectural sculpture, which is attached to buildings, and for small-scale sculpture decorating other objects, as in much pottery, metalwork and jewelry. Relief sculpture may also decorate steles, upright

It is usually classified by the degree of projection from the wall or below. As such, we have low or bas-relief, high relief, and sometimes an intermediate mid-relief. Sunk-relief is a technique restricted to ancient Egypt.

There is also subtractive carving technique, most people though call it sculpture which remove material from an existing block or lump, for example of stone or wood, and modeling techniques which shape or build up the work from the material. Techniques such as casting, stamping and molding used an intermediate matrix containing the design to produce the work; many of slabs, usually of stone, often also containing inscriptions.

In Nigeria, contemporary sculptures has explored a lot of new media by the artists, a lot of types have evolved including sound sculpture, light sculpture, environmental sculpture, street art sculpture kinetic sculpture (involving aspects of physical motion) land art and site-specific art, and Sculpture is an important form of public art. A collection of sculpture in a garden setting can be called a sculpture garden "Wikipedia (2024) . one of the most interesting thing above the Nigerian sculpture who engaged in this works they had all explored beyond an ordinary man's imagination based on the high prowess and mastery of their new media included found objects, wastes and discarded ones.

### **Materials and Techniques**

The materials for sculpture are multilateral, especially now that contemporary sculptures have started their explorations with found media. Notwithstanding, materials such as metal, especially bronze, stone and pottery, with wood, are the classic materials of sculpture although bone and antler are considered, but in most cases, seen as less durable and cheaper options. Precious materials such as gold, silver, jade, and ivory are often used for small luxury works, and sometimes in larger ones, as in chryselephantine statues. More common and less expensive materials were used for sculpture for wider consumption, including hardwoods (such as oak, box/boxwood, and lime/linden); terracotta and other ceramics, wax (a very common material for models for casting, and receiving the impressions of cylinder seals and engraved gems), and cast metals such as pewter and zinc (spelter). But a vast number of other materials have been used as part of sculptures, in ethnographic and ancient works as much as modern ones, apart from now that more there have been rapid explorations on found objects and wasted discarded media by the contemporary artist.

### **The Challenges**

Several factors have been identified as the as the challenges affecting sculpture as an area of art. Below are most of the major challenges facing contemporary sculptures

#### **Societal and Parental Attitudes**

Most parents and the society generally are not favorably disposed to their children studying Art in Schools. Wangboje, (1988) relates this perception to his personal experience at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria then Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria in 1955. According him, he met a friend who was in Zaria to study Engineering. They were happy to see each other and out of curiosity the friend inquired about his (Wangboje's) course of study, his eyes almost popped out of the sockets when he learnt that he was in the University to study Fine Art. And he asked, according to Wangboje: "you mean u came to Nigeria College of Arts Science and Technology just to draw?"

Similarly, Students' choice of subjects have often been traced to their parents mainly because most parents have ideas and aspirations of what they think their children should do when they grow up. Oshinowo, (1996) recounts his experience. He recalls that his happiness on being offered admission to be read art was short-lived because his father, on receiving the news that he was going to read Fine Art,

became enraged. He said that his father felt so disappointed that he refused to have anything to do with his education for the four years he spent in the University. Apart from Oshinowo's experience, some parents would not buy Art materials needed by their children for their study, (Abigail in Google 2025)

#### **The Hike in the Price of Materials and Equipment**

According to Abigail, in Google (2025), the study of Visual Art has tended to cost intensive because most of art materials are imported from overseas. Some do not have suitable locally made alternatives. More understandably, there is scarcity of art materials in the market and most times if gotten, the price of each of the material becomes unbearable. The effect of this is that most sculptors shy away from practicing sculpture, even when they are talented and desire to pursue the practice.

#### **Poor Self Confidence**

Most sculptors lack confidence some of themselves, some who would have liked to practice in the studio have had to change their minds because of the influence of their close friends. Negative statements from these friends have caused many to change their minds.

#### **Poor Viable Educational Program Educational Program on visual art practices Sculpture as a Profession.**

Here, most times most person are not aware that art is practiced in some places particularly those that wants a degree from the study, as such dive into other professions mean while sculpture as profession lacks more practitioner, or even the armature who are interested in the practice due to high demand of sculptural pieces.. All these results from poor harangue of visual art programs.

#### **Prospect for Sustainable Development**

Generally, the needs for art cut across different spheres of human existence. There is no object or thing that was made without artistic input. "Most students even the Society are unaware of the marketability of Art "Filani (1999). Sculptural works are present in our homes, on our bodies (as clothing, jewelry) in the community, religion, industry, they also perform both social, economic, cultural significance. Therefore all of it that is needed by every contemporary sculptors to enhance its sustainable development are encouraged to be made available to enhance effective resuscitation and then veer from sharp decline.

### **CONCLUSION**

For conclusion, Poor Self Confidence, Poor Viable Educational Program Educational Program on visual art practices Sculpture as a Profession, The Hike in the Price of Materials and Equipment are most of the major challenges that have been causing the dilemma confronting contemporary sculpture. However, government funding, self-confident and good knowledge of the relevance of art and its entirety will help boost its sustainable development.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

We therefore recommend viable educational program on the relevance of art generally and the lay more emphasis on the contemporary sculpture and its sustainability.

#### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has exposed most of the challenges encountered by the contemporary sculptures. Therefore it is believed that this study has censored the existing challenges, as such, the sustainability of the contemporary sculpture and its resuscitation is assured.

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