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The Relevance Of Art Theories On Contemporary Sculpture

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ABSTRACT

Art no doubt is a way of life. It is the outward expression of the inward feelings, even though it is separated into different categories or area of specialization such as textile, graphics, painting and sculpture, yet conserves its multilateral significances to mankind ranging from aesthetic appeal to visual transformation of individual or corporate thought about the world and peoples nature. Recently, we have observed maturity in the climate of thought of most contemporary sculptors on the challenges that evolved poor attraction of art connoisseurs, appreciations and critics to their works including at the frontiers of their mastery of tools and materials and skillful manipulation of the visual elements in synthesis with the principles of designs. This study therefore explores the theories of art, its relevance and the need for its consideration during the production of their artworks. The study adopted qualitative research as such, relied on the secondary data source where information was gotten basically from the institutional libraries, the prints and electronic media. The participant observation capacity was assumed for methodology. The study concluded that the significance of art theories to contemporary sculptures is multilateral. Every sculptural artist who wishes to flourish must produce his works considering the various theories and philosophies of art as pointed out here. A theory of art is intended to contrast with a definition of art. The Institutional Theory, Imitation Theory, Expression Theory and Formalism Theory were described in this study, pointing out there different views and perception of art. The study also recommended more variable educational program on other theories that are not mentioned in this study.

Keywords: Art theories, sculpture, painting, aesthetic response

INTRODUCTION

For art to be art it has to present the viewer with a distinctly out-of-the-ordinary perspective on everyday reality. Art is to be clearly differentiated from all forms of decorative craft, which are essentially concerned only with aesthetic experiences. Art is essentially about finding ways, through the manipulation and orchestration of presentational media such as painting, sculpture, literature, film, and performance to bring to life strange and unusual perceptions.

Over the years art has existed since the history of man. Apart from aesthetic significance, the role of art to mankind is incomparably commendable. These includes the communication of peoples idea about what actually existed or figments, production of functional wares that contributes largely to economic growth and development, and preservation of peoples culture, including their history, traditional relics particularly for posterity to enable the upcoming generation have access to what it is. The role of art in preservation, documentation aesthetics etc. cannot be achieved without effective manipulation and mastery of tools and material usage. According to Jakob (2012), all these media are quasi-theatrical and poetic in nature, in that they are essentially gestural, referential, and symbolic, and they present material in a condensed and allusive form. Apart from tools, material and production of artworks another aspect

that has conflicted artists mostly is the poor awareness or little knowledge about the theory and philosophy of art as a matter of fact, this dilemma has hindered most artist from getting to the peak while others veer totally into other areas. This has cost a lot of harm in the various areas of art opened for specialization particularly sculpture. This is therefore the reason why this study explores the relevance of visual arts on contemporary sculpture. Sculpture is the branch of the visual arts that operates in three dimensions.

Art Theories and Philosophy

A theory of art is intended to contrast with a definition of art. According to Dictionary.com (2017), art theory as a branch of philosophy deals with nature, expression and perception of beauty as it relates to fine arts. Similarly, Webster's (2002) see theories as the analysis of a set of facts in relation to one another. Webster's adds that art is also an abstract thought, speculation and principles of a body of fact, etc.

Several art theory have been propounded with the intention of creating a foreground for a specific art to balance and serve as guide to the artist during the production of a given work of art. While other, with argument, although their points as observed do not a condemn a work of art but tries to create a specific or separate place for an artist and his or her art. However in trying to reveal the relevance of art theories to contemporary sculptures, below we shall highlight most of the theories of art.

Art, as Imitation and Representation

The earliest known theories of art in Western philosophy were proposed by Plato and his student Aristotle. The particular art form that most concerned them was drama. In his Republic, Plato presented a design for an ideal state. In the course of outlining his utopia, they argued that poets particularly dramatists should be outlawed. In order to justify the exclusion of dramatic poets from the ideal state, Plato had to give reasons.

And the reasons Plato found had to do with what he regarded as the nature of drama. According to Plato, the essence of drama was imitation the simulation of appearances. That is, actors in plays imitate the actions of whomever they represent. In Medea, the actors, for example, imitate having argument Plato thought that was problematic primarily because he believed that appearances appeal to the emotions and that stirring up the emotions is socially dangerous. An emotional citizenry is an unstable citizenry, ready to be swayed by demagogues rather than by good sense. Problematic primarily because he believed that appearances appeal to the emotions and that stirring up the emotions are socially dangerous. Plato and Aristotle after their arguments on Drama, the extended to poetry it was in their processes on poetry, that they drew there knowledge to art and started with painting. In their discussions of poetry, and, again, both agree that painting is essentially a matter of imitation of verisimilitude. Plato describes painting as analogous to pointing a mirror toward things an idea Shakespeare extends to drama when Hamlet instructs the players to hold a mirror up to nature.

What painters try to do, on the Platonic-Aristotelian view, is to reproduce the appearances of things to copy them not only people, but objects and events. Their view of painting parallels the view of their culture. Popular Greek stories of the painter Zeuxis, for instance, applaud him because he was able to draw pictures of grapes of such surpassing likeness that birds tried to eat them. (Carol 2002)

Since Plato and Aristotle primarily thought of dance and music as accompaniments to dramatic (or religious) spectacles, or poetic recitals, they thought of these art forms as subservient to the purposes of representation. They did not regard them so much as separate art forms, but as supplements or adjuncts of drama. They were parts of drama, and, as such, they were supposed to serve the imitative purposes of drama. Thus, along with drama and painting, Plato and Aristotle thought of music and dance as primarily imitative or representational arts.

Aesthetic response

Theories of **aesthetic response** or **functional theories of art according to Peter and Stein (2018)** are in many ways the most intuitive theories of art. At its base, the term "aesthetics" refers to a type of phenomenal experience, and aesthetic definitions identify artworks with artifacts intended to produce aesthetic experiences. Nature can be beautiful and it can produce aesthetic experiences, but nature does not possess the intentional function of producing those experiences. For such a function, an intention is necessary, and thus agency the artist.

Formalism Theory of Art

The formalist theory of art asserts that we should focus only on the formal properties of art the "form", not the "content" Those formal properties might include, for the visual arts, color, shape, and line, and, for the musical arts, rhythm and harmony. Formalists do not deny that works of art might have content, representation, or narrative rather, they deny that those things are relevant in our appreciation or understanding of art.

Institutional

The **institutional theory of art** is a theory about the nature of art that holds that an object can only become art in the context of the institution known as "the art world". Addressing the issue of what makes, for example, Marcel Duchamp's "ready-mades" art, or why a pile of Brillo cartons in a supermarket is not art, whereas Andy Warhol's famous *Brillo Boxes* (a pile of Brillo carton replicas) is, the art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto wrote in his 1964 essay "The Artworld" (*Danto, Arthur 1964*)

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry an atmosphere of artistic theory, knowledge of the history of art: an artworld. According to Robert J. Yanal, Danto's essay, in which he coined the term *artworld*, outlined the first institutional theory of art. Versions of the institutional theory were formulated more explicitly by George Dickie in his article "Defining Art" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1969) and his books *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (1971) and *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (1974). An early version of Dickie's institutional theory can be summed up in the following definition of work of art from *Aesthetics: An Introduction*:

According to Dickie, George (1971) A work of art in the classificatory sense is 1) an artifact 2) on which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation. Dickie has reformulated his theory in several books and articles. Other philosophers of art have criticized his definitions as being circular. Noël Carroll, (2002).

Historical

Historical theories of art hold that for something to be art, it must bear some relation to existing works of art. For new works to be *art*, they must be similar or relate to previously established artworks. Such a definition raises the question of where this inherited status originated. That is why historical definitions of art must also include a disjunction for first art: Something is art if it possesses a historical relation to previous artworks, or is first art. The philosopher primarily associated with the historical definition of art is Jerrold Levinson (1979). For Levinson, "a work of art is a thing intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art: regard in any of the ways works of art existing prior to it have been correctly regarded" (1979, p. 234). Levinson further clarifies that by "intends for" he means: "[M]akes, appropriates or conceives for the purpose of" (1979, p. 236). Some of these manners for regard (at around the present time) are: to be regarded with full attention, to be regarded contemplatively, to be regarded with special notice to appearance, to be regarded with "emotional openness" (1979, p. 237). If an object is not intended for regard in any of the established ways, then it is not art.

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.

Types of sculpture

A distinction exists between 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 often classified by the degree of projection from the wall into low or bas-relief, high relief, and sometimes an intermediate mid-relief. Sunk-relief is a technique restricted to ancient Egypt. 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 jewellery. Relief sculpture may also decorate steles, upright slabs, usually of stone, often also containing inscriptions.

Another basic distinction is between subtractive carving techniques, which remove material from an existing block or lump, for example of stone or wood, and modelling techniques which shape or build up the work from the material. Techniques such as casting, stamping and moulding use an intermediate matrix containing the design to produce the work; many of these allow the production of several copies.

In contemporary times, due to explorations 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)

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.

The Need To Explore The Relevance of Art Theories To Contemporary Sculpture

Decline of the practice of visual art (sculpture) has become a source of worry to practitioners and other stake holders. It is no longer the challenges of infrastructures or the hike in the price of visual art tools and materials in the market. The challenges that reciprocated a negative storm on sculptures emanates from the severe neglect of the theories and philosophies of art by most renowned sculptors. Over the years, the theories and philosophy of art has maintained its vital role of guiding the artist to know what, to whom, and why an artwork should be produced and very importantly a particularly work to be produce at a particular time. An artist who larks all these pointed out above are best described as a "none moving train" and will be surrounded with confusion even before and after the production of their artworks. In the same vein, Ganagana and Osuku (2022) stated that theories have been able to make known the essence of art in terms of a single key concept such as "representation" or "expression", the awareness of art theory has helped people to carefully examine and also explain the concept of art as well as to distinguish them. Though they do not all agree to appreciate a particular artwork at a time. However it is very important to that here in this study, the relevance of art theories and philosophies are highlighted to educate others who are within and outside sculpture an area of art to learn. Therefore, below are the relevance of art theories and philosophies to contemporary sculpture

The Relevance of, Art Theories to Contemporary Sculpture

Art theories has help to develop the art sector in both Africa European countries for centuries, and also in this contemporary times artist have used it to structure, and reconstruct their art practice styles particularly sculpture and these theories has also helped in their explorations and investigations. According to Boyd (2005) art theories has more than mere influence, and they have proved to be an essential intellectual grounding for most artist in the contemporary times that is geared towards uplifting the society. Berland Straw & Tomas (1998) sees art theories and art practice as two sides of a coin, they work hand in hand. So, an artist cannot complete a work without exploring and applying art theories in that work, Sullivan (2006), states that the image and ideas created in art have the capacity to change not only the artist's conception of reality but also influence the viewer's interpretation of the work. However, the importance of art theory to art practice cannot be over emphasized in the contemporary times. Here are a few reasons why art theories should not be neglected in art practices particularly in sculpture:

1. Art theories are responsible for conductive and comprehensive improvement in art works and art practice, hereby helping artist and art student to always improve in their works of art. Comprehensively to high-quality talent on the bases of cultivating art.
2. Art theories guide sculpture in improving in their choice of techniques by cultivating cultural and universal knowledge in their areas of specialization.
3. Art theories strengthen the role of art education and art practices there by utilizing various artistic expressions in all fields in art education. Also, art theory has promoted the development of art education and the formation of more interdisciplinary sciences in art.

CONCLUSION

The significance of art theories to contemporary sculptures is multilateral. Every sculptural artist who wishes to flourish must produce his works considering the various theories and philosophies of art as pointed out here. A theory of art is intended to contrast with a definition of art. The Institutional Theory, Imitation Theory, Expression Theory and Formalism Theory were described in this study, pointing out there different views and perception on art. The more the contemporary sculptors explore new media in their areas, that is the more the need on the adaptation of the theories and philosophy of art are required. Art theories strengthen the role of visual art practices there by utilizing various artistic expressions in all fields in art education. Also, art theory has promoted the development of art education and the formation of more interdisciplinary sciences in art.

RECOMMENDATION

We therefore recommend more study and viable educational programme that harangues or teaches the relevance of these art theories and philosophy to contemporary visual art practices in general.

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